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SCHISM.

Hoppus, John, 1789-1875.
"

SCHISM,

AS OPPOSED TO

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH:

ESPECIALLY IN THE PRESENT TIMES.



'THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE.'

*by Rev. Dr. Hoppus
Independent Minister*

Second Edition.

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY IBOTSON AND PALMER,
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TO
SIR CULLING EARDLEY SMITH, BART.
ETC.

THE FOLLOWING ESSAY ;
OCCASIONED BY HIS CATHOLIC SOLICITUDE
TO PROMOTE THAT UNITY,
WHICH MUST, ONE DAY, PREVAIL
AMONG ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS,
OF EVERY NAME, SECT, AND PARTY ;
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
WITH EARNEST CORRESPONDING DESIRES,

BY
HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

SCHISM.

THE Scriptures having much insisted on the UNITY of the Church of Christ, and as strongly condemned the sin of SCHISM, SIR CULLING EARDLEY SMITH wishes to offer a PRIZE of £100, for the BEST ESSAY on this subject.

The Essayist should write in a christian spirit. He should derive his views of the nature of the Sin exclusively from the Scriptures. He should be eminently candid and impartial, in specifying the instances in which either churches or individuals are guilty of it. While leading his readers to perceive a schismatical spirit, where it exists, in Creeds, Formularies, or Laws, he should also compel them to detect and to condemn it in themselves.

He should expose the various disguises which it assumes.

He should exhibit its exceeding sinfulness.

He should develop the mischievous consequences to which it leads.

And, lastly, he should suggest the means by which we may endeavour to expel it from our own hearts, from our societies, and from the whole Church of Christ.

The arbitrators are the HON. and REV. BAPTIST NOEL, and the REV. JAMES SHERMAN. Each Essay should be sent to Captain Peevor, Church Street, Chelsea, on or before the 1st day of October, 1837, with a sealed letter, containing the address of the writer. The manuscripts will then be sent to the arbitrators, without the letters, and they hope to make their decision, on the 1st day of February, 1838.

April, 1837.

P R E F A C E
O F T H E A D J U D I C A T O R S .

IT cannot be supposed that in adjudging to the following work the Prize offered by SIR CULLING EARDLEY SMITH, for the best Essay upon SCHISM, we agreed in every particular opinion with the author, or with each other. To expect this from any three persons of ordinary intelligence, and of different denominations, on a subject still so much controverted, would be unreasonable. Our sole duty was, to adjudge the Prize to that Essay, which, of the number sent to us, amounting to fifty-one, appeared to us the best : and this we have conscientiously done.

Well-informed, candid, and practical, the following work is calculated to draw the attention of many to the subject ; and by enabling those who come to the investigation with a devout and dispassionate mind to perceive what is, in the main, the scriptural view of SCHISM, its mischievous effects, and its criminality before God, it will tend, as we trust, to unite the disci-

ples of Christ, not on the ground of ecclesiastical uniformity, but on the more scriptural ground of their having, notwithstanding various discrepancies in the externals of religion, one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and one God. By this enlightened and spiritual union, also, as we believe, the present divisions in the Church of Christ, which have led to such lamentable estrangement of real Christians from each other, can be moderated, and eventually extinguished.

BAPTIST W. NOEL.

JAMES SHERMAN.



P R E F A C E.

IT is probable there may be some, who would be disposed to regard the very title of a book on 'SCHISM' as a sufficient caveat against its perusal. Festus viewed the controversy between Paul, the preacher of Christianity, and the Jews, as consisting in '*certain questions of their own superstition*:' yet the chief among those questions was that which related to '*one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.*'

The author of the 'Analogy of Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature,' complained that, in his day, it was taken for granted by many, that Christianity was not so much as a subject of inquiry, having at length been discovered to be a fiction: so that it was treated as if this were an agreed point among all people of discernment, and nothing remained but to hold it up to ridicule, 'by way of taking reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.'

Since that period, Christianity has been almost

continually assailed by direct attack ; as well as exposed to all the contingencies arising from the progress of changes in the condition of society, perhaps of unexampled magnitude and extent. Yet the additional storms of a hundred years, and the incessant wear of the flux and reflux of the tide, have only proved more signally than ever, that Christianity is not a work framed by the art of man, and based on the alluvial soil of human tradition—but is the lighthouse which a divine hand has fixed as on a rock, and identified, in regard to its duration, with the primitive granite which constitutes the framework of the earth itself.

Christianity has now so far triumphed over mere intellectual opposition, that it is no longer the fashion to be a freethinker. A philosophy falsely so called, has been compelled to retire abashed from the attempt to give law to men's opinions on the subject of morals. Such writers as Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, and Hume, are no longer currently quoted as the sages of modern times. Infidelity in its open form, has met with a reverse of fortune. It has so far descended in the scale of society, as to stoop to vulgar orgies ; and to court applause from those who, unhappily, have been left too much without any other instructor. The empire of the philosophers and encyclopædists on the Continent, also, has been shaken ; and, it may be hoped, will never more regain its ascendancy.

Yet, it is evident that Christianity has great triumphs still to achieve over literature and science. Once in avowed affinity with unbelief, their transition-state is only, as yet, in its commencement. It is with knowledge, as it is with freedom. We see them both rising from the sepulchre of the middle ages along with pure Christianity, and running parallel with her career; though freedom has been longer in putting off the grave-clothes than learning. But the union of these three, has been slow to form: it is still but partial; and they are not yet one. Freedom, is sometimes found deviating into excess, and attaining to no solid and useful objects, for want of the steady and consistent aim which religious principle would tend to produce. Science, still hesitates to enter into a spontaneous, and unbought, and cordial alliance with the ‘wisdom which is not of this world.’ It is the union of Religion, Knowledge, and Freedom, that is wanting, to give moral power to the church of Christ. What a lever would then be in her hand to move the world!—to raise it from the dark gulf of sin and misery, from which it has, as yet, but so partially emerged!

It is a painful reflection, that, by means of her *Schisms*, the christian church has forged the keenest weapon with which the unbeliever can arm himself against her—a weapon which has a double edge—which both slays the convictions of

his own conscience, and inflicts on the church herself, wounds, to which she has rendered herself more liable, because, by losing her native charity and unity, she has been deprived of her power to disarm her foes. If no small leaven of sceptical indifference to all that is peculiar in Christianity, is still found silently working in the minds of many men of science—if some are still disposed to identify earnest religion with bigotry, narrow-mindedness, party feeling, or self-interest, are there none to share with them in the blame?

It is true, indeed, that the principles in which they glory, as forming the basis of our modern advances in the knowledge of nature, might well lead them to search for truth, independently, without allowing their inquiries to be arrested by the inconsistencies of its professed friends. And can any man of disciplined understanding read Bishop Butler's immortal contribution to Christianity, and say that he is certain that the distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel are not true? Can he rise from the pages of Lardner, or Paley, and not be convinced that Christianity is an historical fact, ancient as the era which bears its name? Can he diligently peruse the New Testament itself, with devout prayer to the Creator for 'guidance into truth, if it be *there*'—and not hear a voice speaking to his conscience? Yet how greatly have the unhappy dissensions of Chris-

tians tended to impress him with the false idea, that, of all things, religion, as distinguished from mere morality, is the most uncertain!—But it would be an endless task to attempt to trace the deplorable effects, which have been connected with the odium that has been cast on Christianity, by the inveterate Schisms of the church!

On the other hand, there may be many, who, though they would not, perhaps, regard an argument on ‘Schism’ as, necessarily, a mere quibble in metaphysical theology, or a useless contest about words—may, nevertheless, deem it quite *superfluous*. The nature and the bearings of this offence (for all Christians allow it to be such) may seem already to have been so completely settled, that our conclusions on the subject, so far from requiring any further examination, may rather be viewed as meriting a place among the fundamental axioms of faith. So has always thought the Romish church. So thought the Presbyterians of the Commonwealth—the Episcopalians of the Restoration—the Congregational settlers of New England. So have thought other ‘christian denominations. Now since each of these parties differed in their practical estimate of Schism, in such a way as that all could not have been in the right, the question is—who were in the wrong?—or were *all* in the wrong? It has been the author’s aim, in the following chapters,

to inquire into this subject; and he thinks that the general view which has been taken, if impartially examined in the light of HOLY SCRIPTURE, will be found to have some truth in it.

Whatever judgment may be formed respecting the nature of Schism, and the parties who may be regarded as most guilty of it; no one who keeps a watchful eye on the movements of society, will for a moment doubt that the subject is such, as to have acquired a growing importance with the advance of our own times: being connected with a conflict of opinions—sometimes occasional and desultory, sometimes thickening and becoming more general—which seems destined to be somewhat more than a passing occurrence in the history of religion; and to have a momentous bearing on the relations which religion is to sustain to the social compact, in future ages.

The close of the last century, and the early part of the present, were marked by the pouring out of awful ‘vials’ of slaughter and desolation on the Roman earth. Events, such as had previously been wont to occur, singly, at the interval of ages, became only so many scenes, rapidly succeeding each other, in one stupendous political drama, of a quarter of a century—till a great part of Europe was bestrewed with the wrecks of the ancient thrones, and those which

were not overthrown were made to vibrate to their foundations ; so that the hearts of all men ‘ failed them for fear.’ Those days are, happily, past ; and no general European war has, since, stood in the way of social improvements. Our own beloved country, among other nations, soon began to benefit by the merciful cessation of that appalling storm. It cannot be doubted that much progress has been made, during the last twenty years, in respect to all the great elements on which human happiness permanently depends. Religion, especially, has been a gainer ; and, at this moment, unprecedented efforts are made to cause it to penetrate into all the recesses of society.

But it is deeply to be regretted that the visible unity of Christians, *as such*, independently of their distinguishing peculiarities, is far from having made satisfactory progress. Of late years, especially, the breach between members of the Established Church and Dissenters, has evidently widened. The clashing claims made by these parties, have been brought more into actual collision than heretofore. The revival, too, of the doctrine of ‘ Apostolical Descent’ in the Church of England, has tended to give to the mutually alienated feelings, on both sides, the stability of principle. The same cause has also produced a new Schism within the Establishment itself. It is evident that the lamentable wounds

under which Christianity is suffering from the discord and the dissensions of its professors, cannot be effectually healed but by a devout recurrence to first principles. Ecclesiastical history, properly estimated, no doubt has its use; but the final and only authoritative appeal, must be 'to the law and to the testimony' of Scripture. This the author has sought to consult, not in the spirit of a partisan, but as an inquirer after truth. How far he may have succeeded, must be left with others to determine.

It appeared to him, that some examination of the doctrine of a 'divine right' for the form of church-government, as it has been held by the advocates of different systems, but especially of Episcopacy, was essential to a just conception of the nature of Schism. ^x If the details of any one form be exclusively appointed by divine injunction, all departure from these details must be a rejection of revealed truth; and ought to be regarded as on a level with the denial of those grand fundamental points, in which the churches of the Reformation are agreed. But in the author's humble judgment, no precise and unalterable model of the church is laid down in the New Testament. Principles, and general outlines, are unquestionably given; and these he has endeavoured, in the course of the inquiry, as will be seen, to point out and illustrate.

* Rather some examination of the Constitution of the Primitive Church.

The churches of the apostolic age appear to have been a kind of spiritual republics—each being a part of that universal confederation, which was united in the common bond of faith and charity. A minister or a member of one church, was fully recognised, as occasion offered, by all the rest.

No modern denomination can flatter itself that its use of the term ‘church’, adequately represents the usage of the apostolic times. It is evident that many of the epistles were addressed to churches as consisting of the whole body of believers, whether large or small, residing in one place. We see no trace, here, of the isolation of our present church-systems. Not only do these systems present the spectacle of several denominations in one town of a few thousand inhabitants, often holding but little connexion with each other—sometimes, alas ! openly at variance:—but even each denomination is formed into divisions which have no necessary mutual relations, and may be as separate from each other, as are the different denominations themselves. That it was not so, in the apostolic age, is clear from a perusal of eight of the epistles—not to mention other evidence from the New Testament.

It is probable that all our church-systems will have to undergo changes, before Christianity shall have returned to the fraternal, unworldly union, which subsisted among all the Christians of a lo-

cality, while the church of Christ was yet one. But—this union inviolate—it would seem that some latitude was left for a plastic accommodation to circumstances. It is likely that the church at Philippi, for example, or the church at Corinth, may have differed as to its *internal* constitution, from that of some of the Seven Churches in Asia—as the free and independent states of Greece were various in the form of the republic, while the whole Hellenic race was one, in the common tie of unity in religion. This tie, indeed, as it was made of no firmer material than a poetical mythology, which appealed to feeling—not to faith, could not restrain freedom from turbulence, or save its institutions from speedy dissolution: but the unity of the christian church, is drawn from nobler and more influential sources; and when we reflect, on what principles, and hopes, and aims, this unity depends—it appears surprising that it should not have made greater progress.

The writer has to apologize for some delay in the publication of the following work, arising from causes, some of them unforeseen, which have prevented him from earlier giving it that revision for the press which he has been anxious to do, in order to render it less unworthy of the subject; which, unhappily for religion, seems to abate nothing of its painful interest. If these pages should be rendered the means of leading any to

take a view of Schism less exclusive, and more catholic and scriptural, than they may have done before, the author's labour will not have been in vain. For any faults with which he may be chargeable, he alone must be blamed. In approving of the main argument of an Essay, in any such case as the present, it is not to be supposed that the Adjudicators can make themselves responsible for everything which it contains.

It should be stated, that the name of Archbishop BANCROFT occurs by mistake, in the ninety-fifth page. He was one of the first who introduced into the Protestant Church, the doctrine of the superiority of bishops to presbyters, by divine right. Stillingfleet speaks of him, as among those who did *not* regard Episcopacy as essential: but the tone of Bancroft's remarks on this subject is such, as clearly amounts to the 'apostolical' claim; though he attempts to rest this claim on the authority of the Fathers, not on that of Scripture.¹ LAUD, in the next age, followed strenuously in the same course; and it is worthy of notice, that this prelate distinctly admitted what some have endeavoured to avoid, the necessity of tracing all such claims through the channel of the Romish Church.² On the errors of

¹ Vid. Bancroft's Sermon at Paule's Crosse, 9 Feb. 1588.

² Neal's History. 1733, vol. ii. p. 271.

that Church, the author has freely expressed himself. Romanism, and Rationalism, are, in his judgment, not more at variance with the Confessions of the Protestant Churches, than with the Christianity of the New Testament. He has had occasion, however, to find that some who profess to guide the public mind as to its estimate of books, appear to have little sympathy with any religious opinions that are clearly defined. He has learned, he hopes, to distinguish between attachment to universal and unrestricted civil and religious liberty, and a sceptical indifference to truth.

It may be added that the note at page 549 relates to church-government only, having no further reference.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It is due to one of the Adjudicators to state that in reply to some remarks which have appeared in one of the Periodicals, he has expressed his regret that the author, in revising the Essay for the press, "has added many sentences" to which he could not have consented; and has used, "in some instances, severer expressions towards the Establishment than were in the original manuscript:" for which Mr. Noel cannot be responsible.

The author signified, in his own "Preface," his willingness to bear the blame of any faults with which the work might be chargeable; and he would add that he desires to be held responsible for any sentiments or expressions which may seem too strong on the Ecclesiastical Controversy of the age: more especially such as may occur in the latter half of the last chapter.

It is due to himself that the author should state that he has been, at the same time, kindly exonerated by Mr. Noel from "the least unfairness" towards himself; and he has added that the author "repeatedly offered to submit the proof-sheets" to his inspection.

So far, indeed, are the comments and animadversions which have been made by some Periodicals from being just towards the author, that he scarcely knows what he could have done more than he did, in endeavouring to bring the proofs under the notice of Mr. Noel. They were, as has been stated, "repeatedly offered": some of the first having been forwarded to him, with the intention of sending them all as they came out; and when, at Mr. Noel's suggestion, they were discontinued, the author thought it right more than once, subsequently, to offer to forward them as before.

He considered it his duty, also, when the sheets were printed off, to furnish a final opportunity for any statement to be made in the Preface of the Adjudicators which might be deemed desirable, after inspection of the work; and the proof-sheets were enclosed to Mr. Noel, whose attention was particularly directed to such revisions and emendations as had occurred in the preparation for the press. The author offered at the same time, to notice these, if necessary, in his own "Preface": but on the return of the proof-sheets, he learned that the Adjudicators did not consider this important.

Mr. Noel states to the author that the reason why he did not peruse the proof-sheets that were sent to him, as the author supposed he had done, was, that pressing engagements at the time prevented him from devoting more attention to a subject to which he had already given so much

labour as an Adjudicator: and he did not anticipate that any expressions or sentiments would occur in the revised work such as those above alluded to, and to which he does not agree. Every impartial person must indeed see that, under these circumstances, Mr. Noel is no party to any alleged faults in the volume, against which he has excepted.

The author was not laid under any restrictions as to revision. He may state that unavoidable circumstances delayed the publication of the work. In the mean time, it happened that there was a remarkable, and almost daily thickening of the Ecclesiastical Controversy, both in relation to the temporal and spiritual claims of the contending parties. It was not likely that the author's mind would be wholly unimpressed by this state of things occurring in the interval: nor did he conceal from Mr. Noel the fact, that, under this influence, he was revising for the press the latter part of the last chapter in particular. He did not indeed expect that Mr. Noel could concur in all his expressions* respecting the exclusive claims of the Church of England, or of any of its members: but honestly thinking, as the author does, that these claims are the main cause of our principal schisms, and having expressed similar sentiments in the original manuscript, though in terms less strong, he submitted the proof-sheets to be excepted against

* See the first paragraph of the Adjudicators' Preface, p. xi.

if anything were disapproved. The author ought also to state that all the proofs were regularly sent, as they came from the press, to Sir Culling Eardley Smith, according to a request in a letter from Mr. Noel.

The author has forwarded the above statement, for the inspection of the Hon. and Rev. Baptist W. Noel; who, with that candour and truly Christian spirit which distinguish him, kindly agrees in the correctness of the *facts*; and states that he has no objection to its insertion.

The author has adopted the present mode of noticing the animadversions of the Periodicals above alluded to, in preference to replying to them formally; because he is aware how utterly useless it is even to hope for impartiality and fairness in some quarters.

He has only to add that he has not allowed the Publishers to continue the names of the respected Adjudicators, in the advertisements of the work, without previously consulting them.

Page xxvi. in the Table of Contents, *read* Chapter III.

DISGUISES OF SCHISM.

Page 111, note, *for* זקנים *read* זקנים

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PART I.

U N I T Y.



U N I T Y.

CHAPTER I.

UNITY OF THE UNFALLEN CREATION.

TIME was—when the intelligent creation formed one sacred brotherhood. This fact is plainly involved in the scripture doctrine respecting angels. A perfect moral union reigned among those sinless spirits; and all bore the image of the Universal Father. They were, each in his own order, so many depositaries of Divine love, to the whole extent and limit of their being. Thus the date of Time, marked by the existence of these first-born sons of God, was the epoch which had been destined for the formation of objects whom His love might render blessed.

The unfallen creation was a universe of benevo-
lence. This was the principle which bound the

whole together; and God himself was the mighty source of light and life and love. As the planetary bodies obey the sun, and revolve in the flood of glory which he pours forth;—so, all the myriads of happy beings acknowledged the Creator as the author and centre of their blessedness, and each one reflected a portion of his moral beauty.

There were, doubtless, among them, diversities of rank and station. Where all were mighty, some were the mightiest; and, in these heavenly hosts, one star differed from another star in glory. Some were as suns amidst inferior orbs. There were those who approached nearer than others to the Creator, in the amount and grandeur of their being—say rather, were more remote from nothingness. One beatified spirit might take a view immeasurably more comprehensive than another, of the perfections of the Incomprehensible; and penetrate to a vaster depth, into the wisdom of the Unfathomable. All, it may be, were perpetually advancing in capacity,—in glory,—in bliss. But amidst all varieties of dignity and intellect and power, there was no difference of aim and purpose—nothing which could produce a jar in sentiment, or a discord in the anthem of praise. Pride, envy, jealousy, suspicion, (too often the bane of intercourse on earth,) had no place in *that* world; and whatever diversities might exist, all were one in sacred love.

Happy universe! where the beatific vision of the Eternal, beheld by the myriads of the un-fallen, awakened in them a love like his own: where the hallelujahs of adoring seraphim, and the chorus of all heaven, were but the ebb of one mighty tide—the many waters of divine love, rushing back from unnumbered streams to the fathomless ocean from which all had been derived:—where the Spirit of God filled every breast; and every created spirit was deeply conscious of being held in a sacred and mysterious tie to every other—a tie which seemed part of the tenure of existence, coeval with spiritual being, and inseparable from all thought and intelligence:—where pure and perfect love united angel to angel, and all to God! While this union was entire, there was no place for sin: heaven was the universe, and the universe was heaven; and, in the exercise of unmingled benevolence, all were perfect in holiness and bliss.*

* For proofs that the doctrine of angels, as usually received, is that of scripture, see Doddridge's Lectures, ccx.

CHAPTER II.

THE APOSTASY FROM UNIVERSAL LOVE.

As far as human experience testifies, it is not a poetic fiction, but a solemn verity—that ‘mind is its own place ; can make a ‘heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.’ We learn from revelation the awful fact, that the celestial world was the original scene of moral evil. Angels ‘sinned,’ and ‘kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.’* Now, the law of universal love was broken ; and *selfishness*, before unknown, took possession of intelligent minds, and produced a fatal alienation of heart from the blessed God, and from all who held fast their allegiance to Him. The grand principle which, since time began, had kept all heaven in high and holy fellowship with the glorious Source of being, was violated ; and every apostate spirit became, henceforth, his own centre, and his own god.

* 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude 6.

The result was a catastrophe, as awful to contemplate, as it is overwhelming to imagine—the wreck of principalities and powers—a moral chaos, analogous to what would be produced in the natural world, if a portion of the planetary system were to break loose from the centre, and to rush into confusion and darkness. Then, hosts of beings previously radiant in glory, and glowing with sacred ardour towards the great Source of love, and towards all his intelligent creatures, were hurried away by the enormity of their guilt into ruin and despair, and became ‘wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.’

Henceforward, there were two worlds;—the world where the ancient principle of love yet reigned, and the world which *evil*, the new and monstrous prodigy in the creation, claimed as its own;—the world of blessedness, where God was still all in all, and the world of apostasy and rebellion, where dwelt the wretched spirits who would, if possible, have dethroned Him. There were now two interests in the universe, irreconcilably at variance with each other—the interests of good and evil. It was impossible that the darkness of malevolence could blend with the light of love; and there was now a region of infernal beings—fiends,—a Hell!

Thus was the celestial world unpeopled of a

part of its inhabitants ; and if there be aught that is material in that world, corresponding with the imagery of the Apocalypse, may not the vacant thrones of apostate 'principalities and powers' remain—a silent and everlasting memorial, by which the blessed of all ranks may be admonished that, here, once sat glorious seraphim—but they fell by departing from the universal law of love !

Earth too was once, for a short time, (alas, how short !) a scene of unmingled felicity ; for it was the dwelling-place of two beings who were un-fallen, and who were *one* in mutual affection, and in holy love to their Maker. But the malignant spirit who was foremost in causing the breach of unity which had already been made in the high places of the universe, attempted also to sow the seeds of rebellion in this lower world. The machination was but too successful, and the happiness of Paradise was blighted. Then began on earth mutual recrimination ; and slavish dread of the Divine Parent usurped the place of filial reverence. The dissolution of the bond of perfect love opened the floodgates of sin and misery to man. The grand law of the moral universe once broken—so precipitate was man's downward career, so awfully rapid his assimilation to his demon-tempter, that in *one* generation, he became little less than an incarnation of evil.

The first-born of the first human pair, was a *murderer* ; and the first human death was inflicted through envy, by the hand of man, upon his only brother ! And whence, from that time, have come ‘wars and fightings,’ either in the church or in the world, but from men’s selfish passions ? From an Eden, the earth has been changed into an Aceldama ; and from being the abode of every hallowed emotion, it has become the scene of suspicion, jealousy, envy, and uncharitableness, even among those who ought to be one in the most sacred union.

CHAPTER III.

THE RE-UNITING TENDENCY OF THE DISPENSATION
OF MERCY.

SUCH, it is evident, is the economy of man's nature, that there can be no social happiness but in proportion to the prevalence of benevolent affections. We also know, both from scripture and enlightened reason, that in whatever world man is placed, the very thought of true *individual* felicity, without supreme love to his Maker, is a chimera. The grand object, therefore, of the revelation of mercy, is to restore man to the image and favour of God. The earth, in its apostasy, has never been entirely forsaken of its Creator; nor permitted to be absolutely devoid of the element of moral good. A conflict has always been going on between sin and holiness: and the means have ever been more or less in operation, for reviving in the human breast the original principle of love to God and man. This

is the true vestal fire, which, amidst all adverse influences, has at no time been wholly extinct in our world.

Early after the fall, earth began to be the scene of a restorative dispensation. Even when '*all flesh*' had '*corrupted his way*'—when the principle of benevolence was so far lost, and evil had become so rampant, that the earth was '*filled with violence*,' the Spirit of God was already educating the elements of a new moral creation from the fragments of the old. Amidst the almost universal degeneracy, 'Noah walked with God.' In his person and family, the deluge bore upon its waters all that remained of the ancient reign of divine love; which thus emerged from the ruin of the ungodly world. At length, in Abraham and his seed, the church commenced a formal existence; and, from this period, there have never ceased to be exhibited on earth, examples of the communion of souls, kindred in supreme love to God, and in mutual love to each other—a faint image of heaven.

Blended with all that was awful, and all that was exclusive, in the dispensation which had its birth amidst the thunders of Sinai, there was a spirit of benevolence pervading the code of Moses, which distinctly bespoke its divine source, and the purpose of Jehovah to make the chosen people the conservators of a genuine philanthropy to the

world. The peculiar circumstances of the Jews as a nation,—the fixed and divine character of their ethics, as compared with the unauthoritative and conventional morality of heathenism, secured among them all that was found on earth of a well-principled mutual benevolence,—the shadow of what once was, and the emblem of what should hereafter be. Notwithstanding all the prejudices, all the idolatries, all the wickedness of the nation, there was an element in the Jewish church, of which the Gentile world knew not the existence,—the lingering spark of divine love—love to God, and to those who bore his image on earth.

But it is in *Christianity* that we see the grand machinery complete, which is to restore man to God; and which, when all its powers shall be in full operation, will rapidly hasten on the reign of love, and ultimately bring mankind into a spiritual brotherhood. As clothed with the power of the Spirit of God, the Christian religion has a direct tendency, so far as it reaches, to re-establish the ancient moral order of the universe, to re-unite intelligent creatures among themselves, and to heal the great schism of sin.

We may be the only beings, (fallen angels excepted,) who are at variance among themselves, and with God. Our planet may be the only one which, as it rolls beneath his throne, looks dark

with the shadows of guilt; though it has been the theme of gratitude and wonder to holy intelligences, because in its troubled atmosphere was once seen the mystic star of Bethlehem. This may be the only world where a contest is going on between good and evil; where light and darkness, love and hate, are blended;—the only scene of a mediatorial economy. And this may be the reason of the apparent specialty of those passages of scripture which state that God sent his Son ‘in the likeness of sinful *flesh* ;’ and that Jesus ‘took part of *flesh and blood*,’ and ‘was made *like* unto his brethren.’^x

Or, should these and similar texts be capable of a meaning compatible with the idea of *other* fallen worlds;—should the pestilence of moral evil, unhappily, be more widely spread in the universe,—should other races be estranged from God, and among themselves;—then may the atonement of the cross have extended also to these; and when the King of glory ascended to his Father’s right hand, he may have ‘received gifts,’ not only for us men who dwell on the earth, but also for ‘the rebellious’ of other planets. The *cross* may be the instrument of peace to many worlds; the proclamation of mercy through the blood of the ‘Lamb that was slain,’ may have echoed beneath other skies; and the same principle of union and brotherhood which cha-

^x Hence it is probable he took upon him their fallen nature: Had God intended to show the universal nature of

racterizes the gospel, *here*, may at this moment be the cement of a spiritual relationship among societies of redeemed creatures, in distant parts of the universe.—But of this we know nothing, for nothing is revealed. At all events, in the Mediator, the whole church militant and triumphant is one. In Him, saints and angels make but one communion. Through Him, angels are ‘ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation;’ and while these holy beings ‘desire to look into’ this new and surpassing manifestation of the divine benevolence, it enhances the ecstasy of their joy,¹ if it does not exert an influence in securing the perpetuity of their bliss.

On earth, the cross of Christ is the instrument which is to heal all divisions,—to harmonize all diversities,—to blend all distinctions,—to unite into one whole the most discordant materials. In Christ, there is ‘neither Jew nor Greek—Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free.’ He has made the Jew and the Gentile ‘*one in him*,’ ‘having abolished the enmity; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace: that he might reconcile both unto God in *one body* by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.’²

¹ Luke xv. 10.

² Col. iii. 11. Eph. ii. 14, 15, 16.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOUNDING OF CHRISTIANITY AS A SYSTEM
OF BENEVOLENCE.

CHRIST's first disciples were Jews, and had been under the teaching of John the Baptist, his fore-runner. Thus the church of God was preserved unbroken; and there was a graceful transition from the Jewish to the Christian school,—John himself, Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathanael, forming the earliest germ of the new divine society.

The creed of the first disciples at the outset of their profession, was, 'We have found the Messiah!' A conviction of this truth, mingled, no doubt, with an ineffable attraction of soul towards the person of their heavenly Teacher, was the basis of their discipleship; and was all, perhaps, of which they were, at the time, conscious; for their knowledge was as yet but in its infancy, and they had the deeper mysteries of the kingdom

still to learn. ‘ Lovest thou me?’ was the only test presented to the candidate for admission into the new fraternity; and the pledge given in return, ‘ Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,’ included every other obligation. Their love to Christ was not a calculation, or an inference,—it was a spontaneous impulse—a sentiment which absorbed every other, and it could best be described by saying, ‘ Did not our hearts burn within us?’

As love to the great Master Himself was the source of their profession,—so it was the perennial fountain of a mutual affection. They loved each other in a manner to which there was no parallel among worldly men, and, which to *them* must have appeared inexplicable. They felt that they were all of one family; and with this new and holy relation, they allowed no ties of earthly kindred to interfere. They were also inspired with a zeal and a philanthropy before unknown in the world. They quitted the circle of domestic endearment, and the arts of gain, in order to promote the highest welfare of their fellow-men; and they were prepared to be martyrs to truth, and to benevolence.

The teaching of the Divine Founder of Christianity, was the announcement of a new era—a coming reign of divine love on earth. The moral system, which He inculcated, was not dependent

on punctilious distinctions of ceremony, like that of the Pharisees; or on the esoteric pride of human wisdom, like the ethics of the Greeks. It was based on a principle of holy benevolence, which was designed to communicate warmth and life to the world.

One of the first acts of Jesus, after he had commenced his public ministry, was to announce to the woman of Samaria the breaking down of the distinction between her nation and that of the Jews, and between both and the Gentiles. On a subsequent occasion, he taught the doctrine of universal benevolence, as opposed to all geographical and exclusive predilections, in the beautiful parable of the good Samaritan. He was thus preparing the way for a religion whose main principle was to be *charity*; and he fortified his doctrine by his own perfect example. He taught, that by the remarkable spectacle of zeal and love which his disciples should exhibit before men, and for their good, they were to be the benefactors of the world, when He himself should have quitted it. ‘Ye are the salt of the earth.’ ‘Ye are the light of the world.’*

The life, and the discourses of Jesus, were one great lesson of charity. He declared that all gifts and sacrifices presented to God, are vain, unless he who offers them be ‘first reconciled to his

* Matt. v. 13, 14.

brother;' but that a '*cup of cold water*' given to one of his disciples, as such, shall not pass unrewarded. He pronounced the most humble and childlike to be the 'greatest in the kingdom of heaven;' adding, that whoever received such, received Himself. And in order that the Gospel might be universally known as a system of benevolence, he commanded that the threshold of every house which was entered by its first messengers, should bear witness to the announcement, 'Peace be to this house.'

But it was when the closing scenes of his life drew nigh, and there were none but friends to hear, that the Saviour more fully revealed the mystery of his love; and seemed to draw down to earth a portion of that heaven to which he was so soon to ascend. Retired from the gaze of the world, Jesus developed, in full, his sublime design of establishing an empire of benevolence, in a world which had already been divided and distracted for four thousand years. How mighty the force of selfishness, when, under its influence, the disciples, even in the presence of their meek and lowly Master, began to strive for precedency! And from that day to this hour, what mischiefs have arisen to the church from the unholy debate, now of eighteen hundred years' continuance—'*which should be accounted the greatest?*' where 'all are brethren!'

As an antidote to this antichristian ambition, Jesus not only inculcated a spirit of humility and fraternal love, but illustrated it in a most affecting manner by his own example; and not before he had stooped down to wash his disciples' feet, did he say to them, 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.'* Such a command enjoined what was little practised by mankind; for at the advent of Christ, the world had reached its climax of selfishness and sin. Men were 'without natural affection; hateful and hating one another.' The true religion was represented by the Pharisees; but they substituted forms and rites and ceremonies for purity and benevolence of heart, and, in their practice, dispensed equally with love to God and man.

But the commandment itself, was less novel than the *motive* by which it was enforced. This love was not to be a common benevolence, dictated by nature,—a mere neighbourly feeling, or the tie of family or party. It was not simply another name for the reciprocation of benefits; nor was it the mere attraction of generous spirits, feeling complacency in each other, on account of similarity of mental temperament, education, or taste. Much less was it the offspring of sentimentalism or romance. It was distinguished from all natural affec-

* John xiii. 34.

tions, both by its source and by its end. It was not an earthly friendship, derived from earth, and terminating on earth ; its principle was divine, and divinely implanted in every heart that felt it : and as it came from heaven, it tended thither, and anticipated its perfection there.

This love was not a casual ornament of character, but an indestructible element in the *new creation*, inseparable from the relations which will subsist between all holy beings for ever. It was to be the sign of a divine nature—the very breath of new-born souls. It was a love *for Christ's sake*.^x This was a designation of it which spoke volumes to him who had known it ; and to him in whose breast it had never dwelt, no description could render it intelligible. It was the *free-masonry*, so to speak, of the true religion ; by which its genuine adherents might know each other. This mutual and singular affection—this congeniality of spiritual perceptions and interests, made visible to all men by outward manifestations, was also destined to be the image of heaven on earth—the peculiar mark of the followers of Christ, at once distinguishing them from the world.

The circumstances under which the ‘new commandment’ was enforced, were such as to render it not less impressive to the disciples, than the giving of the moral law was to Israel. It was not

^x Rather it was a love which arose from the indwelling Spirit of Christ in the church.

indeed, proclaimed in thunders, but it was the dying injunction of their Lord. The hour was near when Jesus was to bear the burden of human guilt. Gethsemane was before Him, with its deathly sorrow, and sore amazement—its agony and sweat of blood. The cup of wrath which could not ‘pass away,’ was in prospect, and Judas was at hand to betray Him. He was about to endure indignities and insults, the still more cruel denial of Peter, and the desertion of the rest of his disciples. All this was the prelude to the cross, with its corporal tortures, and the more intolerable sense of being ‘forsaken’ of God. But these awful anticipations, instead of causing him to think less of ‘his own’ whom he had ‘loved,’ did but seem the occasion of his manifesting towards them a more intense solicitude. In a discourse which breathed inimitable tenderness, he urged them to cultivate *unanimity* as their strength and welfare; introduced every topic which might console them when he was gone; and summed up the design of the whole, by declaring that he had spoken ‘these things,’ that in Him they ‘might have peace.’

In this exquisite fragment,* a oneness of affection and of interest between Christ and his disciples, is supposed throughout. They are his ‘friends,’ his ‘brethren,’ his ‘children;’ and

* John xiv. xv. xvi.

the whole family is united in God, and in love. 'If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' The 'Holy Ghost' is also promised, to 'dwell' in this hallowed society. And the visible proof of participation in this divine fellowship, is fidelity to the great commandment 'THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER.'

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIANITY IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

JESUS had now ascended to the Father; and the echo of his last words, 'Lo, I am with you alway,' had scarcely died away from the ear of his disciples, when those of them who had witnessed his miraculous departure from the world, entered on a new career of holy confidence and devotion. Though he was now an absent friend, and an unseen Saviour, the heart-cheering promise had deprived the parting pang of its edge; and the disciples 'returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God; and they continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.'

Thus the apostolic church began with entire unity of heart, in joy, praise, and prayer. Such was the preparation for that mighty energy of the Spirit, which was so shortly to descend from

heaven. The Pentecostal morning found the disciples again ‘with one accord in one place;’ and the splendid miracles of that memorable day were scarcely more wonderful than the *moral* spectacle presented by the rising church—the burning zeal of the apostles—their fidelity to their beloved Master’s commission—their perseverance in devotion—the rapid increase of the Christian band—the sudden and extraordinary moral change exhibited in the conversion of the first three thousand—their stedfastness in the truth—their joy—their simplicity of heart—the charity, the self-denial, and deadness to the world, manifested by all—their frequent commemoration of the Saviour’s death—their perfect consolidation into one body and one interest. ‘They continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.’ ‘And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul.’*

Such is the beauteous picture of the church in its pristine state. Such were the effects of Christianity when it began its public career, untainted with the elements of the world. As yet, there were no divisions, no party broils, no strivings for ascendancy, no heart-burnings of jealousy and envy, no worldly ends, nor private interests, rendering the gospel the scoff of the profane. Love to the ascended Saviour was the predominating principle in every breast, and this love extended to his image multiplied on all sides; while compassion for a lost world added human tenderness to the ardent zeal that was displayed in promoting the reign of heaven on earth.

The blessing of God on this unity and self-devotion was signal: for, notwithstanding the opposition of priests and Sadducees, the church continued to increase, and the moral energy of the thousands whom it numbered within a few months of the Saviour's ascension, was not repressed by the fear of suffering, or of death. When the multitudes were scattered, not by inward dissension, but by the less fatal storm of persecution, churches were planted over Judæa, Galilee, and Samaria. And when this persecution ended, the hallowed spectacle was still more widely presented, of brethren, who, 'walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.'*

* Acts ix. 31.

→ The apostles soon ceased to preach the word *to Jews only*. The ancient animosity towards the Samaritans had already yielded to the generous spirit of the gospel; and Philip had laboured among them with great success. And now the last prejudice of Judaism in the minds of the converted gave way, when, at length, the repeated intimations of Jesus respecting the catholic nature of his kingdom were illustrated by the vision of Peter at Joppa. Henceforth the apostle no longer confined his labours to his own countrymen, but addressed the message of salvation to men of other nations. With him, too, the Hebrew Christians held out the right hand of fellowship to the ‘uncircumcision;’—the middle wall of partition was broken down, and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then hath God also to the *Gentiles* granted repentance unto life.’ *

→ Under the secret conduct of the Spirit of God, and through the visible zeal and charity of its human leaders, the apostolic mission extended its sphere beyond the limits of Palestine; and surprising was its success. Men previously unknown to fame—men who had neither worldly wisdom, nor power, nor influence,—established a moral dominion which spread from east to west, and from north to south. The Roman world saw with astonishment the new prodigy,—

* Acts xi. 18.

the revelation of all-conquering charity. Christianity triumphed over heathen superstition, Jewish prejudice, Grecian learning, and persecution armed with power. Never had such events been witnessed in our world. Never before did the 'foolish confound the wise;' 'the weak, the mighty;' and what was so 'base and despised' in man's estimation, 'bring to nought' things which appeared to have so firm an existence. But God had ordained 'that no flesh should glory in his presence.'* The love and humility and meekness of Christ's disciples, might be scorned by the pharisee, or the philosopher; but they were the '*unresistible might of weakness*,' with which God had determined to do his work. There was an element abroad in the earth, which no power could bind or arrest. The kingdom of God was come among men, revealing itself chiefly as a new and lofty principle of benevolence, and by this, its subjects went forth conquering and to conquer.

That this principle was the grand practical characteristic of the apostolic church, is witnessed in every page of its history. 'It is so well known,' says Paley, 'as to require no citations to verify it, that this love, or charity, or in other words, regard to the welfare of others, runs, in various forms, through all the preceptive parts of

* 1 Cor. i. 27—29.

the apostolic writings. It is the theme of all their exhortations ; that with which their morality begins and ends ; from which all their details and enumerations set out, and into which they return.' *

Paley's Evidences, part ii. ch. 2.

5th April 68

CHAPTER VI.

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN ?

As Schism is an evil existing among *professed Christians*, it is necessary to inquire—who is a Christian? In replying to this fundamental question, the propriety of keeping simply to the divine testimony is too evident to require comment; and that testimony is so clear, as to the main elements of the christian character, that, however opposed to the propensities of men, its general purport is on a level with the most ordinary understanding.

According to the New Testament, a Christian is one who cordially receives the revelation of God respecting his Son Jesus Christ; and who gives evidence of his belief in it by a corresponding spirit and conduct. He has undergone a moral change: he has been ‘born of the Spirit.’ He is a ‘new creature in Christ.’ He has repented of sin, ‘after a godly manner.’ He

ascribes his 'faith,' and its effects, to the 'grace of God,' and to no merit of his own. He is not under the dominion of unlawful appetites and passions; but, 'being made free from sin, he has become the servant of God;' and he has his 'fruit unto holiness.' He is 'led by the Spirit,' and is therefore 'spiritually' and not 'carnally minded:' for 'the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.' 'For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' 'The friendship of the world is enmity with God.'¹

The conduct of a Christian is actuated by a regard to God and his Son Jesus Christ: 'that God in all things may be glorified.' 'For the love of Christ constraineth us.' He is not 'ashamed' of Christ, but, 'confesses' him before the world. He does not 'despise' the least of Christ's disciples, but regards them as 'brethren' for Christ's sake. He 'abides in the doctrine of Christ,' and, 'by keeping his sayings,' perseveres in the path of christian obedience 'unto the end.'²

It has often been justly remarked, that the

¹ 3 John 5. 2 Cor. v. 17. 2 Cor. vii. 11. Eph. ii. 8. Rom. vi. 22. Gal. v. 18. Rom. viii. 6. Gal. v. 22. 1 John ii. 15. Jam. iv. 4.

² 1 Pet. iv. 11. 2 Cor. v. 14. Mark viii. 38. Matt. x. 32. xviii. 10; xxv. 40. 2 John 9. John xiv. 24. Matt. x. 22.

features of the christian character, as delineated in the New Testament, are strikingly opposed to those qualities which have ever attracted the sympathies of the world. The heroes of all ages and nations, whether celebrated in authentic history, or existing only as the creations of fancy, have been chiefly distinguished by dispositions totally different from the passive and quiet virtues exhibited by Jesus himself, and enjoined on his disciples. Ambition—a passion for fame—the spirit that keenly feels, and promptly resents an injury—a patriotism which is but a refinement of the love of self, whose image is seen reflected from a nation, or a party—a generosity inspired by pride, or acting by impulse without principle—a chivalrous sentimentalism—a glorying in human achievements—a dread of the world's frown—an entire devotedness to the present, as though it were the whole of man's existence,—have marked the characters of those, whose deeds, real or imaginary, have ever been emblazoned by the poet and the orator, idolized by the multitude, and handed down to the admiration of successive generations.

In the kingdom of Christ, all is of another order. Here, the noblest ambition is to promote the glory of the Redeemer—the highest achievement, self-mastery—the only lawful resentment, self-aborrence for sin—the true patriotism, love to the universal church. Christian generosity is

that which leads to sacrifices which are felt to have no merit. Christian sensibility is philanthropy directed towards man, not as mortal only, but also as immortal. The only lawful glorying is 'in the cross.' Fear is the fear of God, not the fear of 'man's judgment.' And the grand presiding principle of character is *Faith*, having for its object things unseen, and 'Him who is invisible.' The christian hero is not a man of the same world with the hero of fame. He is not a Decius or a Winkelried, much less a Cæsar or a Tamerlane; but a Polycarp or a Latimer, a Brainerd or a Martyn. He is a martyr, with or without the crown; in either case eclipsing the disastrous glory of the warrior, in proportion as the heat and tumult of battle demand a less deliberate resolve, than a lifetime of self-imposed privation and danger,—a '*dying daily*' for the truth's sake, and the eternal welfare of men,—or a calm submission to torture and to death, at the merciless discretion of the persecutor.

As, in the christian code, all selfish and malignant passions are strictly forbidden, so the opposite virtues are as strongly inculcated;—self-denial—meekness—humility—patience—a forgiving spirit—benevolence. 'Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross.' 'Take my yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' 'All of you be subject one to another; and be ye clothed with

humility.' 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another.' 'Let us do good unto all men.' 'Love the brotherhood.'¹

Love to all Christ's followers is the master-grace of the christian character; that, in which all the rest live and flourish, and without which they cannot be. It is, therefore, perpetually insisted on and reiterated, both by Christ himself and by his apostles, as the grand criterion of a Christian. 'BY THIS SHALL ALL MEN KNOW THAT YE ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YE HAVE LOVE ONE TO ANOTHER.'² Love is the fruit of faith, and the ornament of sanctification. 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.' 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' It proceeds 'out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.' It is a virtue of higher distinction in the school of Christ, than either faith or hope: 'The *greatest* of these is charity.' It is absolutely indispensable as a mark of being in a state of 'grace;' for to be without love is to be without God. 'Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is

¹ Matt. xvi. 24; xi. 29. 1 Pet. v. 5. Eph. iv. 32. Gal. vi. 10. 1 Pet. ii. 17.

² John xiii. 35.

love.' It is a vital part of the evidence on which it is lawful for a Christian to feel persuaded that his character has undergone the change necessary to salvation: 'We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, *because we love the brethren*. He that loveth not 'his brother abideth in death.'*

Such are a few out of the multitude of passages, in which brotherly love is held forth as the most prominent feature of personal Christianity. Profession is an uncertain sign. Gifts may be from nature. Knowledge may be philosophy, with religion for a theme. Freedom from vice may be taste or training. A creed may be hereditary, or changed to suit a purpose. Zeal for orthodoxy, or for modes and forms, may be an intellectual combat, or party strife, or pride struggling to maintain consistency, or self-interest claiming relationship with truth. But christian love is more rare. Its indications are more decisive. It breathes a spirit which, when possessed in an adequate degree, has the ease and grace of nature; and which the world knows not well how to imitate. All love has a tendency to manifest itself; but there is a sacredness in *this* love, which distinguishes it from all other kinds; and which constitutes the last finish of the family-likeness common to all Christ's genuine disciples, amidst all accidental

* 1 Pet. i. 22. Rom. xiii. 10. 1 Tim. i. 5. 1 Cor. xiii. 13.
1 John iv. 7, 8. 1 John iii. 14.

diversities, in all nations, and in all time. It is often seen most to advantage where the world has least influence, and where there is most of native simplicity of character ; as in a company of rural Christians. But whether charity lend an air of refinement to poverty, by rendering the poor man like Him who for our sakes ‘ became poor ;’ or subdue the selfishness of wealth and greatness ; or transform the pride of intellect into the teachableness of a childlike mind ;—it is the same element in all ; and it produces its legitimate effects then—and then only, when the world, beholding it in the church, recognises its moral beauty, and exclaims, with the pagans of the first ages, ‘ See how these Christians love one another !’ *

* Vide, inquiunt, ut invicem se diligunt; *Tertull. Apol.*
c. 19.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH ?

As, in the human frame, the proper condition and functions of each part are the standard by which morbid appearances must be estimated;—so in the body ecclesiastical. Here, also, the consideration of what once was, and what *ought* to be, is necessary to enable us to judge of what is. Schism is a disease in the visible church :—what then is the church in health ?

The word which is generally rendered '*church*' in the English New Testament, is employed in the Septuagint¹ for the whole assembly or '*congregation*' of Israel ; and is synonymous with the term which has been anglicised '*synagogue*.'² Also the Jewish assembly so called, was denoted, Hellenistically, by both these words.

In the New Testament, the original term is applied, once, to the Israelitish nation, the '*church*

¹ ἐκκλησία. Ezra ii. 64.

² συναγωγή. Exod. xvi. 2.

in the wilderness ;’¹ and, three times, to the tumultuous ‘*assembly*’ in the theatre at Ephesus.² In all other cases, it is used in a more spiritual reference ; either in a general or a particular signification.

In its most *general* and extensive sense, the ‘*church*’ is the ‘body,’ of which Christ is the Saviour,’ and ‘the Head.’ It consists of all the pious of every age—the ‘general assembly of the first-born,’ ‘the spirits of just men made perfect ;’ and of those, on earth, who have been brought into a new moral state and relation. ‘The church,’ says Hooker, ‘being a supernatural society, doth differ from natural societies in this, that the persons unto whom we associate ourselves in the one are men, simply considered as men ; but they to whom we be associated in the other, are God, angels, and holy men.’³

In its more *particular* application, the term ‘*church*’ is used for local bodies of ‘believers ;’ as the ‘church at Jerusalem,’ ‘at Corinth,’ ‘at Cenchrea ;’ the ‘church of the Thessalonians ;’ also the church ‘in the *house*’ of Philemon, of ‘Nymphas,’ of ‘Aquila and Priscilla.’ In the plural we read of the ‘*churches*’ of Galatia, of Judea, of Macedonia, of Achaia ; never of the *church* of any province or nation, in the singular.

¹ Acts vii. 38.

² Acts xix.

³ Eccl. Pol. b. i.

There is no unequivocal example in the New Testament, of the word ‘church’ being used for a building exclusively devoted to public worship. This accommodation does not appear to have become common, till near the close of the second century.¹ The heathen Celsus, fifty years before, reproached the Christians as having ‘neither altars nor temples.’² They met together as they could; probably in private houses: and Justin Martyr says that, when he visited Rome, he instructed, at his own house, those who wished to hear him.’³

It is remarkable that the salutations to or from a ‘church’ said to be *in a ‘house,’* are sometimes mentioned distinctly from those sent to or from the *body* of the believers in the same place.⁴ Origen, who wrote in the third century, says, that if an entire family had been converted, the salutation was addressed to the ‘church in that house.’⁵ If so, the expression might simply mean that the household were members of the christian assembly in that place. At all events, the general tenor of the apostolical epistles to churches obviously implies a very close connexion between all the believers composing each church; though it is pos-

¹ Tertull. de Coron. Mil. c. 3. ² Orig. contra Cels. viii.

³ Act. Mar. S. Just. Ruinart.

⁴ Col. iv. 15, 16. 1 Cor. xvi. 19, 20.

⁵ Apud Macknight on Rom. xvi.

sible that in some cities, such, for example, as Rome and Corinth, the church may have been too numerous to assemble statedly in one body ; and we know that at Jerusalem they *broke bread* from house to house.'¹ After the apostolic age, though Christianity went on diffusing itself over countries, each church, with few exceptions, and those not till a late period, seems to have been able conveniently to assemble as one congregation.²

The local epistles are evidently addressed to Christians as organized into societies, for the purpose of observing the ordinances, and exercising the spiritual discipline of Christianity ; and they are said to ' come together in one place,' or ' in the church.' We may therefore define a visible church of Christ, in the language of the ' Articles of Religion,' ' a body of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.'

In the original christian assemblies, the distinction between a clerical order and the laity does not appear to have been clearly marked. In that age of wonders, *charismata*,³ or miraculous

¹ Rom. i. 8. Acts xviii. 10. Acts ii. 46.

² King's Inquiry, Part i. ch. ii. Campbell, Lect. vi.

³ 1 Cor. xii. xiv.

gifts of the Spirit, were largely distributed ; and the power that bestowed them, prompted their exercise in the church. Even independently of these gifts, it would not seem that apostolic sanction was indispensably necessary to preaching the gospel. Apollos does not appear to have had any other qualifications than those of piety, and of nature, aided perhaps by the Platonizing Judaism of Alexandria, more congenial with Christianity than the Pharisaism of Judea. In the case of this warm-hearted convert, we read of no previous apostolical commission ; and of no rebuke to him for assuming the office of instructor, though he himself required to know the truth ‘ more perfectly.’ *

It is evident that all those functions in the church, which involved the *charismata*, ceased with the age of miracles. But Christians are agreed, with a very small amount of exception, that it entered into the plan of the gospel, that the church of Christ should remain organized under official persons to the end of time. The grand point of difference among those who have embraced the doctrines of the Reformation, has related to the *kind* of government which ought to obtain.

Many, who have held different opinions on this question among themselves, have concurred in

* Acts xviii. 24.

maintaining that a certain model of external church-order is so clearly laid down by the apostles, that any voluntary deviation from it is as unlawful, as a departure from the doctrines or moral precepts of Christianity.

Others make no claim to this *divine right*, and hold that neither Christ nor his apostles have given any precise form of church-government ; but that lawful human authority may determine it in any country ; and that when it is so determined, whatever be men's opinions, they are bound to submit, provided nothing be enjoined which is clearly repugnant to the word of God.*

Of a third class,—*some* agree so far with the second, as to suppose that no definite plan of church-order is laid down in the New Testament ; and among them might probably be found those who incline to the sentiment that ‘ whatever is best administered is best : ’—*others*, rejecting this maxim as too latitudinarian, are of opinion that a given form may be perceived clearly enough for general guidance, by those who study the apostolic records diligently, devoutly, and with an unbiassed mind. Yet they admit that the evidence on this point is by no means so *unequivocal*, as that which exists for the grand cardinal truths, on which human hope and sanctification depend. This *third* class neither hold with absolute divine right,

* Stillingfleet's *Irenicum*, 1661. Ch. viii. p. 384.

nor with human authority to enforce any particular system ; but are of opinion that different views and practices may prevail among Christians, on the subject of church-government, without any detriment to unity, or to the highest fraternal love. This love, they hold, may be demonstrated to the world, by means of mutual christian intercourse, by co-operation in doing good, by occasionally worshipping together in public, or even uniting in the eucharist. For they judge that unity of heart, and union of effort, practically answer all the most valuable purposes of uniformity. Thus making a virtue of necessity, in the *best sense*, they wish to render diversity of opinion an occasion of charity.

The advocates of all these several opinions have concurred in maintaining that something more than *externals* is necessary to constitute the * church of Christ. Nor should it ever be forgotten that on the subject of church-government, such men—such *Christians*—as Cranmer, Hall, and Leighton,—Calamy, Howe, and Owen,—have taken different views, while on all the grand principles which affect the character of the gospel as a mediatorial and restorative dispensation, they have been agreed.

To form a constituent part of the apostolic church—to be a member of it, was to be ‘ in professed subjection to the gospel of Christ ; ’ to

make a free personal surrender 'to Him,' and to 'the brethren.'¹ There was no constraint but love. The gospel aimed at taking captive the will itself: every sacrifice that was made, every deed that was done on its behalf, was accepted, only as coming from a 'willing mind'—a mind yielding to the force of principle. Even an apostle, with all his authority, would do nothing to detain from his master a fugitive domestic whom he had been the means of converting, though he was desirous of his services 'in the bonds of the gospel.' Philemon must himself emancipate Onesimus, in order that the 'benefit might not be as it were *of necessity*, but willingly.'¹

The Acts of the Apostles, and their epistles to the churches, are everywhere replete with evidence that christian societies were intended to be wholly of a spiritual character. Hence, they are regarded as distinguished from the world; and are addressed as having obtained 'like precious faith' with each other; as 'saints, and faithful brethren in Christ;' 'holy brethren;' sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.'²

The apostolic times, therefore, would appear to sanction no further distinction between

¹ 2 Cor. ix. 13. 2 Cor. viii. 5. 2 Cor. v. 14. 2 Cor. viii. 12. Rom. xiv. 5. Philem.

² 2 Pet. i. 1. Col. i. 2. Heb. iii. 1. Jude 1.

the 'visible and the invisible church,' than is founded on human ignorance. The church, at this period, was regarded as consisting of all those who were apparently christians—persons who gave outward evidence of being such in reality. Nor do we learn that, during the apostolic age, even the offspring of believers were ranked among those who were fully received as 'brethren,' until their character as regenerate persons was manifested. The apostle John did not rejoice simply in the relation which the children of the 'elect lady' bore to their pious mother, but that he 'found them' actually '*walking in truth.*' The test of personal Christianity was not conformity to any external rite, as Baptism or the Supper: for, after such professions, some, as Simon Magus, were pronounced reprobate. The evidence of being a Christian was treated as progressive; and consisted in '*walking in the light,*' 'in love,' 'in truth,' 'in the fear of the Lord,' 'in Christ,' 'in the Spirit,' in 'continuing in the faith, grounded and settled, and not being moved away from the hope of the gospel.' *

Hence, it is the common doctrine of Protestantism, that the members of Christ's church are persons who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Whatever difference of opinion has existed as to

* 2 John 4. Acts viii. 21. 1 John i. 7. Eph. v. 2.
2 John 4. Acts ix. 31. Col. ii. 6. Gal. v. 16. Col. i. 23.

the subjects, the mode, and the efficacy of Baptism, all who hold the Reformed doctrines agree, in their public documents, that to be in full communion with the visible church, is to profess to be a member of the church invisible. Thus one of the prayers appointed to be used at the Communion, in the Church of England, is a thanksgiving to Almighty God, for the assurance 'that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of his Son; which is the blessed company of all faithful people.' The same views are taken by the Church of Scotland, and by the Reformed Churches of the continent, in general.¹

It appears that, according to the true genius of the apostolic institution, each church, or assembly of christian brethren, took a strong mutual interest in the welfare of all the rest. In the spiritual prosperity of their own particular society, Christians were still more immediately concerned. There was a co-operation of all, to the 'edifying of the church' itself, and that 'unbelievers' might 'worship God.'² The whole spirit of the internal relations of a church was that of a sacred fraternity, cemented by charity and mutual confidence; and for the integrity of which, every member

¹ See Foxcroft's Letter to President Edwards. Works, 1811, vol. vii. p. 167.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 12, 25.

was bound to feel interested ; though the effort to regulate all things by the laws of Christ might often cost dear sacrifices. We learn the nature of these societies from various exhortations in the apostolical epistles which were addressed to the whole number of the faithful in one particular place. Thus the Thessalonian Christians were exhorted, as a body, to ‘edify one another,’ and to ‘warn the unruly;’ to ‘comfort the feeble-minded, and to ‘support the weak.’ The ‘beloved of God in Rome, called to be saints,’ were to ‘receive one another,’ and to ‘admonish one another.’ The church at Corinth’ were enjoined to ‘put away from among themselves’ the ‘wicked person;’ to ‘let all things be done to edifying,’ and ‘with charity.’*

Great as was the sensation which the new religion produced, both in Judea and elsewhere, no design was broached by the apostles, of attempting to establish any new political organization. We never find them seeking strength from the arm of human power, nor asking for more than protection—the common right of all peaceable subjects. They claimed no authority over the persons, property, or liberty of men ; nor would the genius of Christianity have allowed them to

* 1 Thess. v. 11, 14. Rom. xv. 7, 14. 1 Cor. v. 13 ; xiv. 26 ; xvi. 14.

enact temporal punishments in aid of the gospel, even had they possessed the means. In the churches which they planted, christian love, springing from faith—complacency in each other's character, as reflecting the image of Christ, was the sole bond of union. This dissolved—nothing was left to hold the society together. There was a brotherly equality, gracefully sustained by the consciousness of that sublime relationship which was but begun on earth, and which stretched forward into eternity. But while the christian master was to receive his christian servant 'for ever;' 'not now *as* a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved;' christian servants were not to 'despise' their 'believing masters,' 'because they were *brethren*.' While, in Christ, there was neither 'bond nor free,' the stations of men in *civil society* remained; and honour was to be rendered to whom 'honour was due.' Homage was not to be exacted through arrogance; nor was respect to be withheld through envy and presumption. Charity, when it prevailed, possessed a refinement of tact, which adjusted all claims before they were made; and christian propriety of deportment was secured by all, individually, 'esteeming others better than themselves.' Love also put forth its energies, externally, in the form of pity and good-will towards those 'that were without;' and attempts were

everywhere made to fulfil the Saviour's command, to 'compel them to come in.'*

In short, it is evident from the perusal of the New Testament, that the christian church is a supernatural institution. In the apostolic age, it was seen, if ever, in its true light; before its beauty was marred by general corruption, and its power to bless the world destroyed by intestine strife. In relation to the world, it sustained a mysterious and unearthly character, which prevented it from being confounded with any of the inferior elements with which it perpetually came in contact, in making its conquests.

The apostolic church was a faithful depositary of the 'mystery of the gospel;' which it held, not to *conceal*, as the initiated heathen concealed *their* mysteries, but to promulgate among mankind. All believers were taught to consider themselves as a 'holy priesthood.' The church maintained her genuine character by presenting to the world a contrast to itself, and her triumph was to assimilate the world to her own likeness. The influence of the church in thus converting the world, was a demonstration of the Spirit. By this means, the church was enabled to win the world by *transforming* it; for the end of the gospel was not proselytism, but conversion. The gospel

* Philem. 15, 16. 1 Tim. vi. 2. Gal. iii. 28. Rom. xiii. 7. Philip. ii. 3. Luke xiv. 23.

sought, as by a divine alchymy, to transmute the dross of the world into the pure gold of faith and love: its aim was higher than to form a mere admixture of the incongruous elements of heaven and earth. Christianity, as intrusted to the church, and sustained by the Divine Spirit, was an independent element in the moral world, acting by no ordinary laws, and exhibiting phenomena not to be accounted for from any known causes. The power which attended the doctrine of the cross, resembled the lightning of heaven, which is not seen till the moment when it strikes. In human estimation, and when judged of on the principles of the boasted philosophy of the Greeks, the gospel had no glory: ¹ it was a thing of nought. ² But God chose ‘base,’ and ‘despised things, and *things which are not*, to bring to nought things that are.’

As a spiritual institution, the apostolic church did not claim to interfere with those general regulations which are necessary for the welfare of society. Its members were not more free from subjection to human laws, than other men. They were bound to obey magistrates in everything; those things alone excepted, which could not be submitted to, without breaking the laws of Christ. In all other cases, Christians were to yield rather than resist. Rather than damage

¹ Acts xvii. 18.

² 1 Cor. i. 28.

the character of the gospel in its vital part, as a system of charity and peace, they were to ‘suffer wrong.’ They cheerfully rendered to Cæsar, therefore, the things which were Cæsar’s: but, on the other hand, even the Christians of Cæsar’s household acknowledged another Master in all ‘the things which were God’s.’

From obligation to obey the laws of Christ in the church, no worldly office or station formed an exemption; and had that monster of iniquity, Nero himself, become a Christian, even the imperial purple would not have been a badge of the ‘respect of persons.’ Though such a convert as a christian monarch, might by a wise personal influence have been of incalculable service to the gospel-cause; still we have no reason to suppose that, in the church, he would have been regarded by the apostles otherwise than as a highly-honoured brother in Christ;—honoured the more for having freely, and in the face of all the snares connected with his exalted station, become a subject of that spiritual community in which no man was ‘known after the flesh;’ but where the ‘greatest,’ was ‘as the younger,’ and ‘he that was chief as he that doth serve.’ On the throne, the christian Nero would still have been Cæsar: but in the church, the christian Cæsar would have been Nero, a brother of high degree, among brethren to whom it was said by an apostle, ‘If ye have respect to persons ye commit sin.’

Every assembly of true Christians, in proportion as it retains the primitive apostolical character, is a paradisiacal enclosure, won from the wilderness of the world, and the dominion of unhalloved passions,—a spot where the atmosphere is peace, and where the life-giving presence of the blessed Spirit may be traced, in the fruits of a new moral creation. The world, in its compacts and alliances, is chiefly influenced by self-interest; but the church, in its efforts to do good to the world, is designed to prove a standing example of disinterested benevolence. Formed of the elements of faith and love, the christian church is the true conservative principle of society, the real safeguard of nations, and the ornament and glory of the earth. It is, to the world, the only living source of moral illumination,—a pharos which is destined to pour streams of light, from age to age, upon its dark and troubled sea, by ‘holding forth’ to it ‘the word of life.’*

True it is, that these societies of Christians are few in number, as compared with the extent of the world, and exhibit far less vigorous energies than might reasonably be expected from their

* Phil. ii. 16. According to Beza, the allusion, here, is to those towers which were built at the entrance of harbours, and on which fires were kept burning to guide ships into the port.—Nov. Test. *in loc.*

supernatural character. Hence, at present, they do but partially influence mankind. Yet all who believe in the christian revelation, look forward to a period when these centres of moral life and power, no longer few, nor feeble in operation, shall have a mightier effect on the surrounding world, than has yet been known. ‘Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come unto thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah.’ *

* Isa. lx. lxii.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

SECTION I.

GENERAL REMARKS.

UNITY, and Union, are frequently employed as synonymous terms ; and it is not always, perhaps, of consequence to our present object nicely to distinguish them ; though *unity*, in strictness, refers rather to the *state* of being one ; *union* to that actual visible concord and *conjunction* which is the manifestation of this oneness. The church of God is continually represented in Scripture by images which mark its unity, and the close union of its constituent parts. In Christ ‘all are ONE.’ There is ‘one body’—‘one bread,’ or loaf—‘one new man’—‘one fold.’ The church is ‘a vine’—‘a vineyard’—‘a husbandry’—‘a building’—‘a house’—‘a temple’—‘a family’—‘a brotherhood’—‘the household of faith’—‘the city of Jehovah’—‘the holy mountain’—

‘ the Zion of the holy one of Israel’—‘ the bride, the Lamb’s wife, the holy Jerusalem.’

As Schism is opposed to Unity, in order to form an accurate estimate of the former, we must endeavour to ascertain the nature of the latter. Now, in the case of any secular society, unity of design, and union in pursuing it, do not of necessity imply *uniformity* in *all* the opinions and practices of the members, even with regard to the mode of attaining the desired ends. Variety, here, within certain limits, is of little consequence, provided such a degree of sameness in purpose and in action prevail, as is essential to the character and objects of the society. We have examples of this in many of the associations which have been formed to promote the *temporal* welfare of men. *Does the church of Christ universal, lawfully admit of any such variety?* Or, is external uniformity, either œcumenical or national, in organization and in rites, the appropriate—nay, the indispensable characteristic of its unity?

If the latter alternative be true, the papal system has hitherto presented the most faithful image of the unity of the mystical body of Christ; and the Protestant who goes back to Rome, is by no means destitute of an apology, in the plea, often urged by those who do so, that nowhere else can this unity—the sublime and perpetual idea of the New Testament—be so extensively realised.

At the same time—if external uniformity be thus essential as a mark of unity, and as a condition of visible fraternal union, all past experience, and all present appearances, point to anticipations which, for Protestant Christendom, without doubt, are truly forlorn. For, on this principle, how slight the probability that the church will *ever* return to *charity*! If we must wait till men of all varieties of education, prejudice, and party, think alike on all the points at issue,—what prospect, (humanly speaking,) but that the disunion of the professing church will be perpetuated; that it will never cease—no, not even before her Master's second coming!

But if the genuine expression of christian unity is to be sought elsewhere than in outward forms; if, respecting these, Scripture is either silent, or reserved and general; so that some latitude is left for human inference from divine principles: if christian faith, and uprightness, and singleness of purpose in the pursuit of truth, can consist with different opinions concerning the outer framework of the church;—then in *this* there may be variety, while unity remains. Even though it be granted that our *own* particular platform may, in itself, approach nearer than any other, to the constitution of the apostolic church; still, if we have no authority from revelation to insist on that form as among absolute *essentials*, and therefore binding

upon all ; if we have no divine warrant for disowning those whom we should gladly hail as brethren, did they but on this point see with *us* ;—then, surely, it is delightful, amidst all painful contemplations, to reflect—that, among Protestants, there have always been those who have been capable of extending their sympathies beyond one pale, (and that their own,) of the universal church ;—men who have recognised no higher bond than the common Christianity ; and whom no minor consideration has restrained from the exercise of charity, openly shown by union of intercourse and action with the followers of Christ, of every name.

St. Peter * speaks of Christians as ‘ living stones, built up a spiritual house ;’ and there have never been wanting, since the Reformation, some good men, who may be said to have regarded the several denominational bodies of Christians in the light of so many edifices, formed of the same materials from *one* quarry, though differing in architecture. Provided the ‘ spiritual house ’ be always ‘ built up ’ of the same ‘ living stones,’ they have been willing to believe that it may admit of some variety in its structure, without a sacrifice of the end for which it is erected. If this principle be just, there is scarcely more propriety in two evangelical christian communities refraining from all visible brotherly union, because they are

* 1 Pet. ii. 5.

not of the same name, than in a feud existing between them, on account of the one worshipping in a Gothic building, the other in a Grecian.

If individuals, (and there have been many,) eminent for piety, learning, and talents; whose motives appear to have been as pure as can actuate man; and who have shown the greatest anxiety to discover truth,—have, nevertheless, formed different conclusions respecting church-government; does not this very circumstance, even in itself, amount to a considerable presumption that,—account for it as we may, the scriptures are less explicit on this point, than on those respecting which these men have been agreed?

That such men, for example, as Baxter, who was inclined to a modified Episcopacy; and Watts, of the next age, who was an Independent; each, worthy to be reckoned among the first men of their respective times;—the former, ‘a man,’ says Sylvester, ‘of clear, deep, fixed thought, of copious and well-digested reading;’* and, we may add, of vast and almost incredible intellectual labour;—the latter, also intense in study, and of varied and unusual attainments in learning, philosophy, and polite letters; who ‘has provided instruction,’ says Johnson, ‘for all ages, from those who are lisping their first lessons, to the enlightened readers of Malebranche and Locke;’

* Sylvester’s Funeral Sermon for Baxter, 1691. p. 14.

and ‘has left neither corporeal nor spiritual nature unexamined:’¹—both, men of unearthly mould, of deep devotion, of profound conscientiousness and integrity; ardent in the pursuit of truth, lead them where it might;—the one a sufferer for conscience’ sake;—and both sacrificing to conscience worldly advantages within their reach:²—that men such as these should, after all their painful

¹ Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*.

² Immediately after the Restoration, the government *appeared* disposed to some modifications in Episcopacy, by way of concession to the Non-conformists; and, on these terms, a bishopric was offered to Baxter, which he refused; ‘but not,’ he says, ‘as a thing which I judged unlawful in itself, as described in the King’s declaration;—but I feared that this declaration was but for present use, and that shortly it would be revoked or nullified; and if so, I doubted not but the laws would prescribe such work for bishops, in silencing ministers, and troubling honest Christians for their conscience, and ruling the vicious with greater lenity, as that I had rather have the meanest employment among men.’—Baxter’s *Life*, part ii. p. 282. That Baxter judged correctly of the Stuart policy, was but too soon proved; for in 1662, less than two years after the ‘Declaration,’ this conscientious man, and upwards of two thousand more, were ejected from their livings by the Act of Uniformity.

Of Watts, Johnson says, ‘A subscription was proposed for his support at the University; but he declared his resolution to take his lot with the Dissenters. Such he was, as every Christian church would rejoice to have adopted.’—*Lives of the Poets*.

studies, their prayers, and heart-searchings in the presence of the God of truth, *not* arrive at the same views of the form and order of the church, while they agreed so nearly on other points, and especially in the most catholic principles of christian fellowship;—is surely one instance, among the many facts of the like kind, which may well be allowed to have some weight in causing all candid persons to pause, and deeply to inquire ‘What saith the Scripture?’ before they pronounce that a certain uniformity in externals is essential to the unity of the church.

Is it not worthy of reflection, whether these men, and others like-minded, are not the very persons who have kept ‘the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?’ When Watts’s distinguished biographer, himself of another communion, said of him, ‘In his mind orthodoxy was united with charity; and happy will be the reader who is disposed to imitate him in all but his non-conformity;’¹—was this a description applicable to one who held lax notions of truth and moral obligation? or was it the highest eulogy? And when Baxter said, ‘I can as willingly be a martyr for *love* as for any article of the creed,’² was this false candour? or was it an audible expression of the genuine spirit of Christianity? Human examples, it is

¹ Johnson’s Lives.

² Bates’s Funeral Sermon for Baxter.

true, are no substitutes for the divine testimony ; but *such* examples may well lead us to look more carefully to the scriptural grounds and manifestations of unity ; and to inquire wherein it does, and wherein it does not, consist.

SECTION II.

THE GENIUS OF CHRISTIANITY IN RESPECT TO EXTERNALS, AS COMPARED WITH JUDAISM.

It appears that there were elements in the Jewish church essential to its unity, which do not occupy a similar place in the christian institution. Though Judaism and Christianity are parts of the same divine plan of mercy, their genius is widely different. The spiritual ideas of the former were deeply enshrined in materialism ; the outward and visible signs of the latter are so manifest, and so transparent, that they form no veil to the thing signified. Judaism was chiefly a code of laws ; Christianity is rather a system of principles. In Judaism, formal command and prohibition were found everywhere. Rites, ceremonies, and all the punctilious details of *external order*, were so exactly prescribed, that little room was left for diversity. These things, indeed, *were Judaism*. They

were as much a part of it, as were the moral and spiritual elements which distinguished it so entirely from all heathenism, and of which elements these outward observances were, in many cases, the vehicle and the emblem. The moral law itself was not more armed with divine sanctions, than the ceremonial. Both were given from Sinai. Both were proclaimed with awful solemnity. If the ten commands were ushered in with thunders and lightnings; so also, 'the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the Mount,' while the same divine voice described the loops and taches of the tabernacle, the rings of the ark, and the branches, knops, and bowls of the candlestick.¹ To infringe the minutest regulation of the ceremonial law, was as plain and direct a violation of the command of Jehovah, as to make a 'graven image' for the purpose of idolatry. Hence the sacred history records that Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, were miraculously destroyed, because they 'offered strange fire before Jehovah, which he *commanded them not.*'²

The genius of Christianity with regard to externals, is obviously that of another economy. Here, almost everything is spiritual. The baptismal water and the eucharistic bread and wine, are the only rites of the church which have been com-

¹ Exod. xxiv. xxv.

² Levit. x. 1; comp. xvi. 12, 13.

manded by Christ.¹ Christianity is not a law of ceremonies, but of the inner man. If, to use the language of the Saviour himself, the ‘eye be single,’—if the conscience be thoroughly enlightened, and the heart sound, the ‘whole body will be full of light,’² and the Christian will be secure from serious error. He will attain to the *spirit* of the gospel-institute, even where the *letter* may cease to be a guide. In Judaism, the letter was more essential; for the ancient church was in a kind of pupilage. Christianity is the religion of a more advanced and intellectual age. While, therefore, in the Jewish dispensation, forms and rites were treated as of so much importance, in themselves, (for their meaning was not directly explained;)—to Christianity, they are but incidental appendages. Here, when externals are alluded to, it is always with an *express* reference to some spiritual end beyond themselves. To attach that independent importance, therefore, to modes and forms, which is sometimes assigned to them by Christians, savours rather of Judaism than of Christianity. Hence, the apostle Paul, regarding the Mosaic dispensation as adapted to the juvenile age, as it were, of the church, thus writes to the Galatians, some of whom, though they had been converted from heathenism to Christianity,

¹ Luke xxii. 19. Matt. xxviii. 19.

² Matt. vi. 22.

were disposed to listen to Judaizing teachers, who made salvation to depend on exterior acts and ritual observances: ‘ We, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.’¹

Without supposing all the various external arrangements which have been adopted in Protestant churches, to be equally congruous with scripture, or with the spirit of Christianity, it may still be true, that uniformity of outward observance may form no indispensable ingredient in the unity of the christian church. Among the Jews, strangers were not received as incorporated members of the community, nor do they appear to have had full access to the Temple,² unless they

¹ Gal. iv.

² It is thought that even *proselytes of the gate* were not admitted into the inner courts of the temple, which were within the enclosure called the *chel*; ‘ but only such as were thorough professors of the whole Jewish religion.’—Townsend’s New Testament, 1825. vol. ii. p. 115.

This regulation appears to be nowhere distinctly stated by any Jewish authority; but as even Jews themselves

had previously submitted to all the initiatory rites of Judaism. It was the tendency of this religion, to reduce all things to one model, and to bring every convert under the same formal discipline. But the different estimate of mere externals, which is peculiar to Christianity, is constantly presented to our view in the New Testament; and enters largely into the spirit which breathes throughout the whole. ‘For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,’ and ‘faith which worketh by love.’*

Hence, we find that under the actual administration of the apostles, the important principle was abundantly illustrated, that THE UNITY OF

were not allowed to go beyond the outer court, unless they were clean, it is most probable that this class of proselytes were under a similar restriction.

The only original sources of information with regard to the structure of the second temple, are Josephus and the Talmud; and their accounts are, in many respects, obscure and contradictory. According to the Rabbinical writers, the *Chel* (חֵל or חֵיל, Sept. προτείχισμα, περίτειχος. Vulg. antemurale,) was the interspace between the two principal parts of the temple, and consisted of a terrace of ten cubits wide, which ran round the outside of the inner wall, thus completely separating it from the court of the Gentiles.—Vid. Maimon. de ædificio Templi.

* Gal. vi. 15; v. 6. Heb. ix. 10, 13.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH DOES NOT DEPEND ON UNIFORMITY IN OUTWARD OBSERVANCES. The Mosaic spirit of uniformity was evidently not regarded as essential to the new religion; and Christianity, though emerging, as it were, from the very heart of Judaism, revealed itself as another element. A certain latitude in things external, marked the first rise of Christianity; and an attempt to secure uniformity, would often have produced a most serious sacrifice of genuine unity. Diversity was allowed, that edification, and charity, and unity, might be preserved.

In sanctioning this diversity, it was not likely that the apostles would be left without divine guidance; for the whole question was at issue—*what is the spirit of Christianity with respect to forms?* Was it to take the rigid, unbending type of Judaism, which prescribed every ceremonial to the letter? Or, was its genius more free—less resting on the letter than on the spirit—less national—more adapted to *a world*? Was the unity of the new church to make its appeal to the eye or to the heart?

To this inquiry, the Saviour himself may be said to have furnished the virtual reply, in his own discourses; in which the paramount superiority of what is moral, to all that is ceremonial, is so repeatedly insisted on.* But during the mi-

* John iv. 21—23. Matt. xv. 20; xxiii. 23. Luke xi. 38—41.

nistry of the apostles, occasions arose for the practical application of this principle to the existing circumstances of the rising church ; and from the line of conduct which these inspired men pursued in legislating on the subject of *forms*, we may learn what is the true genius of Christianity in regard to them. In all the mere externals, respecting which there was any *question*, we see not the shadow of a design to require uniformity. Jews were not to impose *their* rites on Gentiles, nor were Gentiles to prohibit Jews from following their own. In these matters, practice was to depend on circumstances ; charity being always maintained inviolate. In no case was compulsion allowed, or strife, or alienation of heart. Compliances must be optional ; and if not yielded, the non-compliance was to be no bar to love, or to any christian privilege. There was to be a forbearing mutual indulgence, up to the last limit of truth. Had Christians, in their controversies respecting forms, always taken a lesson from the apostles, how different an aspect might the church of Christ have presented, from that which it at this moment, unhappily, wears !

There was a diversity of practice among the various classes of primitive Christians, in regard to which no man was to ‘*judge*’ another ; as ‘in meat or drink,’ or in respect of ‘a feast, or of the new moon, or of sabbaths.’* Some observed *cer-*

* 1 Col. ii. 16.

tain precepts of the ceremonial law, others received *none*; others obeyed *all*.

The *proselytes of the gate** were Gentiles born; but had forsaken idolatry, and adopted *in part* the Mosaic religion. They were permitted to live

* The distinction, already alluded to, (p. 63, note,) between *proselytes of the gate*, or persons who worshipped the true God, and followed the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, without professing entire Judaism; and *proselytes of righteousness*, who were naturalized as Jews, having submitted to the rite of circumcision, and to the whole law of Moses,—explains passages in the Old Testament, which would otherwise appear inexplicable, and even contradictory: see Exodus xii. 49; Levit. xxv. 47; Deut. xiv. 21. The terms, indeed, (גֵּר שַׁעַר) proselyte or stranger *of the gate*, and (גֵּר צֶדֶק) proselyte or stranger *of righteousness* are not found in scripture, (though the former seems described as גֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיהָ, *the stranger within thy gates*;) but the two sorts of proselytes are recognised by Jewish writers, including Maimonides, the best of the Rabbinical authors; ‘the first who ceased to be a trifler,’ says Casaubon, as Pliny said of Diodorus. The distinction is also supported by Selden, Witsius, Spencer, Vitranga, Drusius, Calmet, Lightfoot, Danzius, and the learned Talmudist Schoetgen, (Horæ Hebraicæ, vol. i. p. 154.) See also Critici Sacri, vol. x. section 14. To these authorities may be added Prideaux, Lord Barrington, and Townsend. The opinion that there was but one kind of proselytes, those of *righteousness*, or who had become entire Jews, is maintained by Lardner, Doddridge, and Hales.

among the Jews, and to worship in the outer court of the Temple ; though not allowed to eat the passover, as being still of ‘ the uncircumcision.’ It was incumbent on them, by the Levitical law,¹ to avoid partaking in heathen festivals, to abstain from eating blood, and from eating animals not killed by pouring out their blood ; and to abstain also from the unlawful lusts practised by the Gentiles. Now, at Antioch, some of these ‘ sojourning strangers’ had become converts to Christianity ; on whom some professing Hebrew Christians from Judea attempted to impose the seal of Judaism, and the whole law of Moses, as necessary to salvation. But the decree of the church at Jerusalem, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, exempted these semi-Jewish Christians from the proposed new yoke ; and only retained them under their usual and voluntary ceremonial observances. Thus these proselytes would stand in nearly the same relation as before, to the prejudices both of the Jews and of the heathen.

The converts to the gospel, immediately from the *Gentiles*, whom the Judaizing teachers also attempted to bring under the same bondage, were treated by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians,² as wholly free from the claims of the ceremonial law, having never previously been subjected to any part of it. Especially would

¹ Lev. xvii. xviii. ; comp. Acts xv. 23. ² Gal. v. 1.

yielding to those who sought to ‘glory in their flesh’ have been a sinful compliance, as it would have been acknowledging what the zealots contended for—the necessity of the Jewish rite to salvation; and to those who submitted to it with this view, the apostle declared, ‘Christ shall profit you nothing.’¹

Of the christian converts who were genuine *Hebrews*, the apostle, on one of his visits to Jerusalem, found many thousands, all very zealous for the law ‘of Moses.’² The light of the gospel unveiled of materialism, was too bright and unearthly for the vision of those who had so long been used to a dispensation of shadows, which still lingered in the Temple—not as yet destroyed. St. Paul, therefore, in the case of the *Jews*,³ treated the Mosaic rites as *things indifferent*, declaring that ‘circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God.’⁴

Sensitively jealous as the apostle was of everything that might cast a shade on the gospel itself, no one was more ready, on all lawful occasions, to conciliate by complying with prejudice. He

¹ Gal. v. 2.

² Acts xxi. 20.

³ Among these would also be included foreigners who had become naturalised, as *proselytes of righteousness*.—See p. 67, note.

⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 19.

sacrificed everything to charity, but *truth*. He became ‘all things to all men;’ that he ‘might by all means *save some*.’ To the Jews he ‘became as a Jew;’ that he ‘might *gain* the Jews;’ ‘to them that are without law, as without law;’ that he ‘might *gain* them that are without law.’¹ Yielding to the suggestions of the other apostles, he once assisted four men in the Temple, in the ceremony of discharging their vow.² On the same visit to Jerusalem, he celebrated the feast of Pentecost;³ and it is probable that on a former occasion he had kept the Passover.⁴ At Cenchrea, we find him under a vow, which involved certain subsequent Jewish sacrifices and purifications.⁴ He persuaded Timothy to submit to the initiatory rite of Judaism, ‘*because of the Jews*;⁵’ the mother of Timothy being of that nation. Titus, however, as he was of Gentile parentage, was exempted;⁶ for *his* initiation into Judaism, would both have strengthened Jewish prejudice, and have offended the converted Gentiles.

Some of the Hebrew Christians at Rome supposed the *meats prohibited* in the Mosaic law to be unclean *in themselves*; and therefore not to be eaten. They also believed that the *Jewish festi-*

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 20—22. ² Acts xxi. 23. ³ xx. 16.

⁴ xviii. 21. See Macknight’s Tr. of the Epistles, 1816; iv. 499.

⁵ Acts xviii. 18.

⁶ xvi. 3.

⁷ Gal. ii. 3.

vals ought still to be observed.¹ The Gentile believers, on the other hand, regarded these observances as part of an economy that had passed away. Hence, harsh judgments arose on both sides. But St. Paul exhorted all to mutual forbearance and charity ;² every one being at liberty, in such points, to follow his own convictions of what was right, and bound to leave his brother to do the same ; since any other course would lead to sin and strife. ‘ To his own master,’ said St. Paul, ‘ every one standeth or falleth.’³ Christ is the only Lord of conscience ; and the usurpation of his throne in the church, by an authoritative decision in things which he has left indifferent, is one characteristic of the grand apostasy, personified as ‘ the man of sin,’⁴ who ‘ *commanded* to abstain from meats.’⁵

A question arose at Corinth, with regard to *meats* that had been *offered to idols* ; and it was solved on the same principle of doing all things with devotion and charity, and for edification.⁶ It was not proper for Christians to partake of these meats in an *idol's temple*, as this would have appeared to be a sanction of idolatry ; but in other cases, they were to be guided by circumstances : nor did the unity of the church, here again, require uniformity of practice. In buying

¹ Rom. xiv. ² xv. 1, 2, 3. ³ xiv. 4. ⁴ 2 Thess. ii. 3.

⁵ 1 Tim. iv. 3.

⁶ 1 Cor. x. 31, 32, 33.

meat in the market, they were not bound to inquire whether it had been offered to an idol, or not; and on visiting a heathen family, they were at liberty to eat what was set before them, 'asking no questions for conscience' sake.' Yet if any person should say, 'This has been offered to idols,' they were to receive the remark as implying that their partaking of the meat was liable to be construed into some encouragement of idol-worship. A heathen might now suppose that a compliment was paid to his god. A Jew, or a weak Christian, erroneously attaching a certain idea of reality and power to the idol, might be offended; or be led, perhaps, in some cases, to partake, without the full consent of conscience. 'Eat not, therefore, for his sake that showed it, and for conscience' sake—conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other.' Still, meats are, *in themselves*, indifferent. 'Meat commendeth us not to God: neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse:' 'wherefore,' adds the generous apostle, 'if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.' *

Such was the charity inculcated by the inspired messengers of Christ. Such is the genius and spirit of the Gospel, in relation to practices which may vary, while its doctrines and its morality re-

¹ 1 Cor. viii; x. 25—29.

main unchanged. That one individual was of the Jewish, another of the Proselyte, or a third of the Gentile *denomination* of Christians, was no lawful obstacle to entire unity of heart. The kingdom of God was ‘not in meat and in drink; but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’¹ It did not consist in things external, but in things spiritual. Its genuine subjects were to be known by their cherishing a certain delicacy of feeling respecting each others conscientious scruples, on points not affecting the essence of Christianity; and they were to reverence each others liberty, as a trust belonging to those who must, each, ‘give an account of *himself* to God.’ ‘No man’ was ‘to put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother’s way.’ ‘Every man’ was to be ‘fully persuaded in his own mind,’ that his peculiar observances were *his duties* in the sight of God; and all were to ‘follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.’²

Now, do not these apostolic facts and testimonies furnish, in themselves, a strong presumption that the essential unity of the christian church is independent of uniformity in things external? Where is the evidence to the contrary? Is there any scriptural reason why the manner in which the apostles dealt with the different convic-

¹ Rom. xiv. 17.

² Rom. xiv. 12, 13, 5, 19, 20, 21.

tions of various classes of Christians, should not be regarded as illustrating a principle which is capable of being applied, extensively, and in all ages, to everything in Christianity which relates merely to outward form? Surely the above examples were not mere accidental and passing aspects of the new religion: they mark its permanent character and spirit. The tone and temper of the christian precepts and precedents which arose out of these cases of conscience in the apostolic age, may be viewed as furnishing an analogy by which Christians, in general, may be guided respecting the manner in which they ought to regard the differences which subsist among them, on the circumstantial points connected with church-government, rites, and ceremonies.

SECTION III.

THE RELATION OF THE FORM AND ORDER OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST, TO ITS ESSENTIAL UNITY, AND
MANIFESTED UNION.

THERE has been no greater barrier to the visible demonstration of the unity of Christians before the world, than the tendency which has so much prevailed among them, to attach undue importance to

precise agreement in outward discipline. Yet it may safely be affirmed that the whole genius of Christianity, and the manner in which all that is external is treated of in the New Testament, warrant the conclusion that UNIFORMITY OF CHURCH-ORDER, EITHER CECUMENICAL OR NATIONAL, IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

I. This is true of particular FORMS, RITES, AND CEREMONIES of worship. None will contend, for example, that any precept can be found in the New Testament, rendering imperative the use of liturgical *forms of prayer*. Prayer is of the *heart*. It consists not essentially in words, but in faith and devotion ; compared with which, the mode of utterance is of little moment. ‘ Liturgies not being enjoined or forbidden in scripture,’ says Paley,* ‘ must be judged by their expediency ;’—a sentiment which, understood as it ought to be, leaves their use or non-use, as in the case of the Mosaic meats and days, to the conscientious option of Christians, according to their convictions of what is most consonant with the scriptural view of prayer, and with edification. Into the abstract question of the comparative merit of liturgies and *free prayer*, or whether a judicious combination of the two might not be attended with advantage, we do

* Moral Philosophy, book v. ch. 5.

not enter. But can it be doubted for a moment that there are thousands who follow each practice, and equally draw nigh to God '*with the heart?*'

Liturgies, it is true, have been ascribed to St. Peter, St. Mark, and St. James; and some have supposed that a liturgy may have been alluded to by our Saviour, when he made the promise that if 'any two should agree¹ on earth' in prayer, they should be heard. Few, however, it is presumed, would place any dependence, and still fewer lay a basis for *necessity*, on arguments so apocryphal, or on a criticism so obscure. Nor does the Jewish synagogue furnish a more valid ground for *insisting* on a liturgy; for though we should grant that human forms of prayer were *there* read in the time of Christ, by what analogy is such a practice *binding on Christians?*² Besides, the Jewish

¹ συμφωνήσωσιν, Matt. xviii. 19.

² The Rev. G. Townsend, in his elaborate and excellent work on the New Testament, (chap. iii. sect. 4,) says that the example of Christ, at Nazareth, (Luke iv.) 'sanctions to us the use of liturgies, vestments, etc., in all churches.'

Could this be clearly proved, it would be difficult to perceive how any christian church were justified in not adopting these observances. But if the presence of Christ in the synagogue, and his express testimony to the inspired prophecy of Isaiah, be interpreted as giving a divine right or sanction to any *human* forms which might be in use, where can we draw the line? Did our Saviour, then, by his attendance, sanction *everything* in the Jewish

church had, at this period, become notoriously corrupt;¹ and while the Levitical code had been continually enlarged by tradition, many things were taught as '*doctrines*' which were but '*the commandments of men.*'² Happy had it been for the cause of religion, if Christians had never imitated the conduct of the Pharisees, by claiming authority either to prescribe or to forbid the use of forms ! What is, in itself, lawful, may become unlawful, when thus enforced : for compliance is *then* the dictate, not of conviction, but of necessity, or of self-interest. Besides, does the unity of the body of Christ depend either on the use, or the absence, of a liturgy in worship ? May we not, here, apply, in its *spirit*, the apostolic exhortation ? ' Let not him that eateth despise worship, which, as the above valuable writer intimates, was, at the time, corrupt, and had ' much to be condemned in it ? ' Surely He did not.—Indeed the principle of this argument (from what Christ did as a Jew, and as the Messiah, and therefore Lord of the synagogue, and of the whole Jewish economy) would equally tend, if thoroughly carried out, to establish a divine precedent for retaining, in perpetuity, all the rites and ceremonies of Judaism. If any body of Christians prefer a liturgy, vestments, etc., let them use them ; but let not the sacredness of divine sanction be brought forward, on uncertain ground, to uphold what is merely human.

¹ Horne's Introduction to the Holy Scriptures, 1822, vol. ii. p. 386.—Gieseler's Kirchengeschichte, Bd. i. Abth. 15.

² Matt. xv. 9.

him that eateth not ; and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth, for God hath received him.’¹

Similar remarks are extensively applicable, also, to *vestments*, *postures*, and all ritual and ceremonial *observances*, not specified in the New Testament, and not absolutely required by common decency. But is there one precept of Christ, or his apostles, by which any particular *forms* of this kind are enjoined ? Yet how often have they been made essential to the unity of the church ! What have not the most conscientious and upright men, men whom all parties are now glad to claim, endured, in consequence of these outward forms being imposed ! How justly did the Puritans reply to the plea of those who imposed them as ‘ things indifferent,’ and, ‘ therefore, to be submitted to ;— ‘ then *let them be indifferent* ; do not enforce them.’ You ‘ *impose* them, and that makes them *essentials* ;’²—an argument in the true spirit of the apostolic doctrine respecting the Mosaic practices. For, apart from the important consideration, (which we now omit,) how far any of the rites or ceremonies, enforced, might, in themselves, be consistent with the letter, or with the spirit of Christianity, — compliance would have been sinful, unless free and conscientious. ‘ He that doubteth

¹ Rom. xiv. 3.

² Neal’s Hist. of the Puritans, vol. i. p. 132—227.

is condemned if he eat; because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.’¹

Are even *creeds* and *confessions*, as couched in human terms, essential to the unity of the church? How far, historically, they have *conduced* to real unity, — or have shielded the church from the irruptions of error, — or, if desirable, under what precise circumstances, and in what manner, they may be employed, is not now our question; — but can they be scripturally *enforced*? ‘The first Christians used no written creed. The earliest pastors of the church drew their belief from scripture itself; and they were contented to express that belief in the language of scripture.’² Have we anything approaching to fair historical evidence for attributing even the most venerable of our creeds to the apostles? and ought the general principle of imposing as doctrine, any merely human or doubtful forms, to be admitted in the church of Christ?

All parties have erred, more or less, in thus rendering *imperative* the ‘commandments of men.’ Even granting that the traditionary evidence for any supposed apostolic usage may be so overpowering *to me*, that, although I am obliged to admit that it is not actually found in the scriptures, I can still conscientiously adopt it for my-

¹ Rom. xiv. 23.

² Waddington’s Church History, p. 26. Ibid. p. 27. Maclaine’s Mosheim, 1806. vol. i. p. 116.

self, as virtually of divine authority ;—granting that I cannot sympathize with my brother Christian in his scruples,—that they seem to me to arise from prejudice, or possibly from some obtuseness of intellect which renders him less alive to the force of evidence ;—shall I, even then, build compulsory *uniformity* on this ground,—the ground of my own private conviction ? Shall I make his yielding *his* opinion to me an essential to my visible oneness with him in Christ ? Is he then a ‘ weak brother ?’ Of the propriety of so terming him, we will not stay to inquire. But be it so—that he is a ‘ weak brother.’ Is it not still a question, like those of ‘ meats,’ and ‘ days’ — a question which does not affect the *system* of Christianity ? ‘ Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.’—‘ But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.’ *

It is the unanimous testimony of Ecclesiastical History, that the second century was fertile in those germs of corruption which, in the third, assumed a decided form. Mistaken visions of outward unity mingled largely in the process of degeneracy. Piety became confounded with its forms, till the diseased eye of superstition or ambition, saw little beauty but in visible uniformity ; and on *this*, greater and greater stress was laid, in proportion as faith and charity, the vital elements of real unity,

* Rom. xiv. 1 ; 1 Cor. viii. 12.

died away. Still it was long before the church, in general, had so far lost the ancient apostolic spirit, as to hold uniformity indispensable to unity, and to enact laws for its enforcement.

‘The unity of the church,’ says Lord King, ‘consisted not in a uniformity of rites and customs, for every particular church (company or congregation of Christians) was at liberty to follow its own proper usages: one church was not obliged to observe the rites of another; but every one followed its own peculiar customs.’¹

From several of the early christian writers, we may learn that customs and observances which, in later ages, were made essential,—such as given *forms of devotion*, certain ecclesiastical *vestments*, or *kneeling* at the Supper, were not in the primitive times *imposed*. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyprian, testify that the mode of celebrating the *eucharist* varied with time and place;² and Firmilian of Cæsarea says that, amidst such diversity, ‘according to the difference of names and places, there has not, on this account, been a departure from the peace and unity of the church.’³

¹ Enquiry into the Primitive Church. By an Impartial Hand. Lond. 1691. Part I. chap. ix. § 2; comp. Part I. chap. i. § 1, 2.

² King’s Enquiry, part ii. chap. 6.

³ Multa pro locorum et nominum diversitate variantur,

We hear of no public claim to the power of enforcing uniformity, till near the end of the second century, when the name of the Church of Rome first became a term of ill omen, in consequence of the dictatorial conduct of Victor,¹ its bishop, in respect to the time of observing the Paschal feast. This appears to have been the first example on record, of that assumption of ecclesiastical domination, which was destined, in subsequent times, to prove no other than the pest of the church, and the curse of the world!² The attempt to assimilate the custom of the Asian churches to that which prevailed in the West, was successfully resisted, and these churches were not overawed by

nec tamen propter hoc ab ecclesiæ catholicæ pace atque unitate aliquando discessum est.—Apud Cyprian. Epist. 75. § 5.

¹ He demanded from the Asiatic churches exact compliance in this matter with the practice of Rome, and on their refusal he fulminated against them an edict of excommunication, as it were the first thunder of the Vatican. This memorable event is supposed to have taken place about A. D. 196. See Waddington's History, p. 14. Also, Gieseler's Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte. Bd. i. Abschn. iii. § 57.

² It is true a controversy had already occurred at Laodicea on the same subject, about A. D. 170; but it did not produce any breach of charity between churches. Fragm. in Chron. Pasch. Præf. p. 6, 7. Euseb. iv. 26. Epist. Polycratis apud eund. v. 24.

the dictate of Rome. The period was not arrived for the church to become the slave of human power, and to be content to embrace the chain which ambition was afterwards to rivet on her for nearly a thousand years. The glory of the apostolic age still lingered over the christian tabernacle; and the church, in general, had not lost the spirit and the freshness of her first love. Unity was still of the *heart*. Its empty shadow and substitute were not yet seen in the centralisation of ecclesiastical power, and the sameness of modes and forms. A ceremonial uniformity was not as yet mistaken for the 'one soul,' and the 'one heart' of the infant church. This crisis was reserved for manifestation to a further stage of degeneracy. Rome and the world had not yet succeeded in gaining the ascendant.

Eusebius has preserved fragments of a letter from Irenæus, and others of Gaul, remonstrating against the intolerance and presumption of Victor, and reminding him that the diversity which had long existed as to the precise time of celebrating the Paschal feast, and the fast preceding it, had never, before, produced any breach of charity in the universal church. 'Those who preceded us,' say these men of peace, 'were not less in harmony among themselves, than we are now; for the diversity of opinion respecting the fasts, does but

establish the unity of faith.’¹ We further learn that the former ‘presbyters who presided over the church’ of Rome, though they themselves observed the solemnity differently from the Eastern mode, were in charity with all Christians who came from places² where that mode prevailed; and such individuals were at liberty to celebrate the feast according to their own judgment, and were admitted to participation in the eucharist.

In the same letter we are informed that, on a visit³ which ‘the blessed Polycarp’ made to Rome, many ‘little discussions’ arose between him and Anicetus, one of Victor’s predecessors,⁴ and especially the question respecting the different modes of observing the above festival. Polycarp appealed to the practice of St. John; and Anicetus to the example of those whom he had succeeded in the church of Rome, and who professed to follow St. Paul. The conclusion was, that as the apostles had not been anxious for uniformity in these outward observances, a diversity of custom ought not to interfere with unity. ‘They did

¹ Irenæus, (A. D. 184,) apud. Euseb. Hist. lib. v. cap. 24.

² παροικῶν; hence parochia, parœcia, paroisse, parish. This word is continually used by Eusebius, (about 270—339,) as synonymous with ἐκκλησία, a church or congregation.—Euseb. Hist. Eccl. *passim*.

³ About A. D. 160.

⁴ διὰ πρὸς σοῦ πρεσβύτεροι.—Euseb. lib. v. cap. 24.

not,' says Irenæus, 'indulge a contentious spirit; for though Polycarp could not persuade Anicetus, nor Anicetus Polycarp, they partook of the communion together; and, in the church, Anicetus gave place to Polycarp in the administration of the eucharist, by way of honouring him; and they parted in charity; and the whole church maintained peace, whether observing the same rite or not.'*

II. But it may, perhaps, be said that none of these diversities affect the question of *official distinctions* in the church. Do not the efficacy of the 'sacraments,' the validity of ordination, and the unity of the body of Christ, depend much on a certain uniformity in CHURCH-GOVERNMENT? This is a very serious question, and merits a deliberate answer.

So far is certain, at the outset:—that whatever is *taught* in the New Testament respecting the officers of the church, and which cannot be regarded as peculiar to the apostolic age, is binding in all future time. The spiritual nature of their functions, as ministers of a 'kingdom' which is 'not of this world;' their moral and religious character; the fraternal manner in which they are to discharge their offices, not exercising

* Ibid. See also Neanders Kirchengeschichte, Abtheil. iii. 2. c.

‘dominion’ and ‘authority’ like the ‘princes of the nations,’¹ or ‘as lords’ over their allotted charges;² the faithfulness required of them in preaching the gospel, and in maintaining the discipline of the church according to the rules laid down by Christ; the special attention they are enjoined to pay to their own spirit and conduct, so as to be ‘ensamples to the flock:’—these and similar obligations must obviously remain coeval with the church militant itself.³

But it is evident that the example of the first age is greatly modified by the peculiar circumstances which attended it. The apostolic office, and all others which involved *charismata*,⁴ or miraculous gifts, soon ceased; and the controversies respecting church-government, which have so long existed among Protestant Christians, have chiefly related to the nature of the offices and functions belonging to those who, in the New Testament, are denominated ‘bishops,’ ‘elders,’ and ‘deacons.’⁵

Now it will be admitted by every denomination of Christians, that they themselves have, more or less, adopted regulations for which no precise parallel can be found in scripture. The utmost

¹ Matt. xx. 25.

² τῶν κλήρων. 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

³ 1 Tim. iii. ; Tit. i. 6. ; Matt. xx. 25 ; 2 Tim. ii. 2 ; 1 Tim. vi, 17.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii.

⁵ ἐπίσκοποι, πρεσβύτεροι, διάκονοι.

that can often be contended for, is, that the practice pursued is *useful*, and that, in the judgment of those who follow it, it is *not inconsistent* with any divine law or precedent. Yet professing Christians, not content with framing rules and determining usages *for themselves*, have attempted to legislate for *others* against their will. Human inferences have been fearlessly drawn from divine premises partially revealed; and these inferences have been put on a level with the express commands of Christ or his apostles, and pronounced essential to the visible, if not the real, *unity* of the church. Hence, intolerance — fines — imprisonment — banishment — the Inquisition — torture — death! — and all these inflicted by those who claimed to be called followers of Him, whose inspired apostle placed charity even above the faith that ‘justifies,’ and the hope which is ‘as an anchor of the soul!’ *

It is by no means the intention of this Essay to discuss the *relative merits* of the different systems of external church-order. It is sufficient to show that NO ONE FORM OF GOVERNMENT OUGHT TO BE INSISTED ON, TO THE EXTENT OF MAKING IT ESSENTIAL TO THE VISIBLE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST: nor should we refuse to maintain a catholic and open union with Christians who, we have reason to believe, conscientiously adhere to other modes.

* 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

It is not necessary, in order to sustain this principle, that we should hold all kinds of church-government to be equally agreeable to the New Testament. Even if we allow that one form may be more readily deduced from scripture than another, and that the value of a system does not consist entirely in the *manner of its administration*,—yet, if the divine word have not treated the subject of church-government in such a way as to render agreement on this point *essential*, (like the faith and morals of the gospel,) no mere *human* power has a right to make it so. Conscientious differences of opinion, here, ought not to prove a bar to christian union. The inconsistency of allowing them to be such, is often the more obvious, because no one party have been entirely unanimous as to the principles on which they found their own practices.

Admit that there might be less diversity on this subject among Christians, if all were diligent and eager in studying it as related to the divine will, and with less of prejudice, or passion, or party feeling, or worldly motive : still can we suppose that uniformity in the frame-work of church-government was intended by Christ to be an indispensable element of visible unity ? Had this been his design, surely the whole order of the christian sanctuary would have been laid down in the New Testament with scarcely less exactness than the

structure of the tabernacle, the functions of its officers, and the entire detail of its services, were prescribed in the Levitical law. The general, and even *incidental* manner, in which the subject of church-order is alluded to in the Acts and the Epistles, and the paramount importance which is constantly assigned to faith, holiness, and charity, might well have led Christians to pause—ere they attempted to make the adoption of their *own* particular inferences necessary to the unity of the church.

Grant that one general system of church-government is actually more in accordance with the letter and spirit of the New Testament than another,—do the sin and folly of expressing doubts respecting that system appear at once obvious from the divine word, as is the case with questioning certain doctrines and precepts of the gospel,—such as the Mediation of Christ, or the keeping of his Commands? Must we not admit that *our own* adopted system is but partially unfolded in scripture?—that many questions might be asked thereon, to which the divine oracle returns no answer? and which, if solved at all, must be determined by human analogies, or by an appeal to convenience? Without implying that, in the progress of sacred literature, and profound, analytical, unbiassed biblical criticism, additional light may not, from time to time, be thrown on

the subject of church-government,—is it not a fact that, after all the volumes (and they have not been few) which have been written on it, Christians who think alike in *everything* else, here differ? Nay, do all the members of any one denomination agree precisely in the grounds, or the details, of their own adopted system?

Have not Presbyterians, for example, held varieties of opinion *among themselves*, on the particulars of their own platform—such as the office of elders, the authority of church-courts, the limits of popular right,—and even on the question, whether any definite form of church-government be appointed by Christ? ¹ Thus, while many Presbyterians have held with the *divine right*, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Beza, Salmasius, and the divines of the Augsburg Confession in general, though regarding the *parity* of ministers as the primitive form, did not consider it essential. And to the above names many modern ones might be added. Is the Presbyterian system, as often practised, reconcileable with some of the transactions alluded to in the New Testament, as those in the church at Jerusalem, ² or in that of Corinth? ³ and may not similar questions be asked respecting the form of Presbyterianism established by that apostolic man, the Rev. John Wesley?

¹ Fleming's Testimony. Edin. 1826. p. 283, 286, 256, 363.

² Acts xv.

³ 1 Cor. v.

Have not Independents differed on many points among themselves,—such as the source and manner of ordination, the right to exhort in the church, the functions of the several officers? A kind of democracy has sometimes been pleaded for, which has tended to level all official distinctions, and to abolish all spiritual ‘obedience’ and ‘submission’;¹ and the autocracy of the churches has often been held with unscriptural jealousy, so as to check that thorough mutual recognition and intercommunion, which evidently characterized the churches of the apostolic age. Would even the Congregationalists, into whose modification the more rigid form of Independency is now fast merging, and who hold what is essential to the system, united with more of Presbyterian combination, profess that there are no diversities of practice in their body? With regard, also, to the *jus divinum*, have there not been among them, as in other denominations, different shades of opinion?²

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.

² Dr. John Owen, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and Dean of Christ Church, in the Protectorate, is regarded as one of the chief writers on the Independent form of church-government, of which he strictly held the *jus divinum*, maintaining that ‘Congregational Churches alone are suited to the ends of Christ in the institution of his church.’ (Treatise on Evangelical Churches, chap.

Have not Protestant Episcopalians, also, entertained various sentiments as to the internal relations of Episcopacy, and especially the basis on which it ought to rest? From the days of Laud,* and his milder and more moderate cotemporaries Hall and Taylor, to recent times, some have maintained the divine right and apostolical succession

vi.) He also regarded the ‘occasional conformity,’ and ‘catholic communion,’ with the Church of England, pleaded for by Baxter and other Nonconformists, for the sake of maintaining charity,—as conformity to ‘worship not of divine institution,’ and therefore ‘unlawful.’ Modern Congregationalists are by no means implicit followers of Owen, being far less *exclusive*. Their system admits of the manifestation of charity, by seeking occasions of worshipping, or communing, with Christians of all other denominations; and both private individuals and ministers have been found so doing. The catholic character of this system is further evinced by the fact, that it admits of different *modes of worship* among its adherents; for the ministers of congregations in which a liturgy is used, are as eligible as others to belong to this body of Christians.

Notwithstanding the strict Independency of Owen, it is due to him to state, that while he was in authority at Oxford, ‘he gained the good wishes of the Episcopalians, by allowing a society of them, who used the Liturgy, to meet every Lord’s day, over against his own door, without disturbance, although they were not legally tolerated.’—Orme’s *Life of Owen*, 1826, p. 143. See also Turnbull on Church Government, 1821, pp. 36, 49, 51, 4.

* See Heylin’s *Life of Laud*, p. 398.

of diocesans. This ground, which, for a century past, appears to have been given up by many, has lately been resumed; and on it have been founded as high claims to the exclusive validity of the episcopal mode, as history records—the case of the Papal church alone excepted.* Indeed the

* ‘ Had he been taught as a child, that the Sacraments, not preaching, are the sources of Divine Grace;’ *etc.*—Advertisement to Tracts for the Times, 1834.

‘ We have neglected the real ground on which our authority is built—OUR APOSTOLICAL DESCENT.’

‘ We who have been ordained clergy, acknowledge the doctrine of the APOSTOLICAL SUCCESSION. And, for this reason, we must necessarily consider none to be *really* ordained who have not *thus* been ordained. For if ordination is a divine ordinance, it must be necessary (*etc.*) As well might we pretend the Sacraments are not necessary to salvation, while we use the offices of the Liturgy; for when God appoints means of grace, they are *the* means.’—Tracts, No. 1.

‘ As people vaguely take it, (that article of our Belief, The One Catholic and Apostolic Church,) it seems only an assertion that there is a number of sincere Christians scattered through the world. But, doubtless, the only true and satisfactory meaning is that which our Divines have ever taken—Apostolic, as founded by the Apostles; Catholic, because it spreads its branches in every place; i. e. the Church Visible, with its Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.’

‘ This indeed is the unanimous opinion of our Divines, that as the Sacraments, so communion with the Church,

complaint is, that Protestantism has become 'more Protestant than our Reformers;' and it is stated that as to the doctrines now included in Protestantism, 'our church has taken the *Via Media* between it and Popery.'*

Other Episcopalians, and among them many is 'generally necessary to salvation,' in the case of those who can obtain it.—Tracts, No. 2.

'For many years we have been much in the habit of resting our claim on the general duties of submission to authority, (*etc.*) instead of appealing to that warrant, which marks us, *exclusively*, for GOD'S AMBASSADORS.

'Except, therefore, we can show such a warrant, we cannot be sure that our hands convey the sacrifice; we cannot be sure that souls worthily prepared, receiving the bread which we break, and the cup of blessing which we bless, are Partakers of the Body and Blood of Christ.'

'By separating themselves from our communion, they separate themselves from the ONLY CHURCH IN THIS REALM WHICH HAS A RIGHT TO BE QUITE SURE THAT SHE HAS THE LORD'S BODY TO GIVE TO THE PEOPLE.'—Tracts, No. 4.

'The Sacraments are evidently in the hands of the Church Visible; and these, we know, are generally necessary to salvation, as the Catechism says—The Sacraments are in the hands of the Clergy; this few will deny, or that their efficacy is independent of the personal character of the administrator.'—Tracts, No. 11.

The title of 'Successors to the Apostles' appears to have been distinctly assumed by some of the bishops of the third century.—See Bingham's Church Antiq., book ii. ch. 2.

* Tracts for the Times. 1834. No. 41.

bishops, have given up the plea of divine right;—*some*, as Bishops Jewel, Downam, Bancroft, Morton, Andrews, and others, judging Episcopacy to be the primitive form, but not regarding it as necessary; *others* distinctly making the form of church-government to depend on the discretion of the magistrate and the clergy. This, as Stillingfleet observes, had been, up to his time, ‘the judgment of most divines of the Church of England since the Reformation.’ And he adds, speaking of Cranmer, ‘he owned not Episcopacy as a distinct order from Presbytery of Divine Right, but only as a prudent constitution of the civil magistrate, for the better governing in the Church.’¹ Similar views were entertained by Archbishop Whitgift,² Bishop Bridges,³ Hooker,⁴ King James,⁵

¹ Stillingfleet’s *Irenicum*, 1661, p. 383, 393.

² ‘No form of church-government is by the scriptures prescribed to or commanded the church of God.’—Whitgift against Cartwright, p. 658.

³ ‘God hath not expressed the form of church-government, at least not so as to bind us to it.’—Bridges on Government, p. 167.

⁴ ‘Sundry forms of discipline may be equally consistent with the general axioms of scripture.’—Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.* book 3.

⁵ *Christiano cuique Regi, Principi, ac Reipublicæ concessum, etc.* ‘The civil power in any nation has the right to prescribe what external form of church-government most agrees with the civil form.’—King James apud Stillingfleet’s *Irenicum*, 1661, p. 394.

Hales of Eton,¹ Chillingworth,² Stillingfleet,³ and many more.

Among these, may be quoted Lord Bacon. ‘Until your Majesty doth otherwise determine and order,’ he says to King James, ‘all actual and full obedience is to be given to ecclesiastical jurisdiction as it now standeth.’ ‘For the second point, that there should be but one form of discipline in all churches, and that imposed by necessity of commandment, and prescript out of the word of God;—I, for my part, do confess that in revolving the scriptures I never could find any such thing; but that God hath left the like

¹ ‘They do but abase themselves and others that would persuade us that Bishops by Christ’s institution have any superiority over men, further then of reverence, or that any Bishop is superior to another, further then positive order agreed upon among Christians hath prescribed.’—Hales on Schism, p. 13.

² ‘Whether any one kind of these external forms and orders, and government, be so necessary to the being of a church, but that they may be diverse in diverse places, and that a good and peaceable Christian may and ought to submit himself to the government of the place where he lives, whosoever he be?’ Chillingworth answers the former part of this question in the negative, and the latter in the affirmative. — Chillingworth apud Stillingfleet; Iren. p. 396.

³ ‘No certain unalterable form of church-government was delivered to them, (the Apostles.)’ — Stillingfleet. Iren. p. 346 *et passim*.

liberty to the church government, as he had done to the civil government, to be varied according to time, and place, and accidents, which nevertheless his high and divine providence doth order and dispose. In church matters, doctrine is immutable, and so are the general rules of government; but for rites and ceremonies, and for the particular hierarchies, policies, and disciplines of churches, they be left at large.' He adds, 'and therefore it is good we return unto the ancient bounds of unity in the church of God, which was one faith, one baptism; and not one hierarchy, one discipline; and that we observe the league of Christians as it is penned by our Saviour; which is in substance of doctrine this: *He that is not with us, is against us*: but in things indifferent, and but of circumstance, this: *He that is not against us is with us*.'*—So different, and even opposite to each other, have been the views of those who have adopted the episcopal mode, as to the basis on which it rests.

From this brief survey, it is evident that men of *various religious denominations*, including persons of the highest eminence, both clerical and lay, and the most celebrated divines of the Reformation, have held the principle that the *external form* of the church, is *not essential* to its nature. Into the

* Considerations Touching Pacification. — Bacon's Works, 1824. vol. ii. pp. 526. 529.

merits of the *grounds* and *bearings* of their respective opinions, it is not necessary to enter. Some arrived at their conclusions by a different road from others; and few thoroughly understood the true character of that religious freedom, (freedom from responsibility to *man* for religious faith,) which many have claimed in opposing Rome. But the intellect and piety of the Reformation, and of the denominations which sprang out of it, including the church of England in particular, have, for the most part, given their suffrage, *theoretically* at least, to the axiom, that the church of Christ may exist under different outward forms.

The extensive and ramified diversity of opinion as to church order, which has thus prevailed among those who, if we judge from their confessions and writings, have been agreed on the grand points of Christianity,—and the admission, by men of all parties, that the church of Christ is not limited to form, well accord with the fact that the New Testament does not demand uniformity as a sign of internal, or an expression of external unity.

That Christians, in general, have been too remiss in seeking occasions of visibly demonstrating the real unity of all Christ's disciples, as independent of every outward distinction, will be admitted by good men of various names. Yet where externals are not made essentials, the fault of dis-

union rests with individuals, rather than with bodies, or with systems; the door stands open to the full manifestation of charity, and there is room for all to unite, without obstacle. Where externals *are* made essentials, the door of charity is so far closed; and professed Christians, though living beside each other, may have as little intercourse as the prisoners of the Inquisition.

Why is there, in England, we may ask, to go no further, so lamentable a deficiency, at this moment, of the spirit of christian union? That party feeling, and intemperate conduct, have prevailed among us on all sides, must be admitted, and ought to be deplored. Of the sad consequences of this spirit, we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. But when the question relates to the unity of Christ's church, we must not leave unexplored, the *theory* of the obstacles to that unity. Does not the real cause of this disunion involve something more than what is accidental and temporary? May not this deplorable spirit be traced, in a considerable measure, to the *different views* which Christians entertain respecting *unity*?

Between several classes of Christians, it is well known there has been a mutual recognition, extending beyond mere private intercourse, or even occasionally meeting in public on the platform of the same Society. They have acknowledged each other as *christian bodies*. There has been among

the pastors, a full admission of each others claim, as faithful men, to be ministers of Jesus Christ; and this admission has been *practically* held up to the world. Wesleyan, Presbyterian, Baptist, Independent, and Moravian* ministers, may be found occupying each other's pulpits. Clergy men of the Church of Scotland have preached in the pulpits of English Dissenters, and in those of the Secession Church; and Dissenting Ministers have officiated in the pulpits of the established Kirk of Scotland. Thus servants of Christ belonging to these various denominations, have appeared before all men as brethren of the same church—the church universal; because they agree in holding ‘the doctrine of Christ:’ and while each has retained his own particular views of church-government, no one has supposed those views essential to unity, or acted as though they

* The United Brethren, or Moravians, who are Episcopalians, have no ecclesiastical regulations which prevent their fraternal intercourse with other denominations, on the footing of christian equality; and when occasion presents itself, their ministers do not decline exchange of pulpits with those of other orthodox bodies. They use a liturgy, but do not require uniformity in rites and ceremonies; formally professing ‘that difference in these, does not destroy the unity of the church, according to the ancient canon; *Differentia cæremoniæ non tollit unitatem ecclesiæ.*’—See Historical Account of the United Brethren. Manchester, 1815. pp. 24, 38.

were so. Thus christian union has been manifested on the basis of christian liberty, the right of private judgment,—the only basis on which it seems at all probable, from what we know of human nature, that thorough union will be established. For there appears little prospect of even the best and most pacific men, of different communions, thinking precisely alike on the details of church-government. At all events, no plan for the formal ‘*Comprehension*’ of all denominations under one general system and discipline, has yet succeeded; nor is there, according to present appearances, any indication of the approach of such an event.*

There are only two cases in which the right of private judgment, as to religious opinions, can be superseded. One is, when there is either an express revelation from God as to the point in question, or a precedent so evidently intended (all circumstances taken into the account) to have the force of divine law, that it becomes virtually a revelation. The other case is, when God has delegated authority to *man* to decide. In the

* See the plan of the Lord Keeper Bridgman in 1668, and that of Tillotson and Stillingfleet in 1674, in Orme’s *Life of Baxter*, 1830. Vol. I. pp. 333. 384.

Immediately after the Revolution, other attempts towards a *Comprehension* were made without success: the result was the Toleration Act, in 1689.

former, there is no room for private judgment, because the will of God, when known, is final. In the latter, whatever there may be of private judgment, is restricted to the party whom he has delegated. To possess this delegated power, would indeed be an awful prerogative: to exercise it, awful responsibility: to claim it without a divine right to do so, awful presumption. If such a power ever existed, it was possessed by the apostles. If they possessed it, (whether there be any distinct traces of it, apart from inspiration, or not,) how cautiously did they exercise it! We have already seen that they did not compel Christians to uniformity in things external. Of this compulsion, the first grand example, before referred to, was set by Rome; and thus a note, sadly prophetic of the future, was sounded from this city, a century after the universal church had lost the living example of the mild and benignant christian patriarch St. John, the last of the apostles.

Few Protestants, however, would now openly contend for a power divinely delegated to man, to frame, at his discretion, the conditions of unity and union in the church of Christ. There remains, therefore, no appeal but to divine authority, on the part of any class of Christians who may practically recognise no ordination and no sacraments as truly valid, but those of their own platform; and who make their own views of church-govern-

ment indispensable to that visible unity,—that fraternal union and interchange, to which there is no systematic bar among other denominations.

Controversy on church-government, let it be once more remembered, is far from being the object of this Essay. To discuss the relative merits of the different systems, is no part of its plan. Justice, however, would not be done to the subject of *the unity of the church*, if the obstructions to its visible manifestation were not traced, in some measure, to their origin. A local eruption on the surface of the human body may vary at different times, but its *cause* may be seated in the constitution. Unhallowed strife among Christians has, unhappily, broken forth in our day in an increased degree, and blame has not been confined to one party. This eruption of evil passions, however, may subside. It may break forth again. It may again subside. But we must examine into the inward disease—the organic source of mischief. However agreeable, for so it would truly be, to believe that the evil is only on the surface; painful conviction that this not the case, necessitates the unwelcome task of probing the church's wound; for without this, how can it be healed?

Will fidelity allow the fact to be overlooked, that the occasion, beyond all others,—the grand leading occasion of disunion among Protestant Christians in this country, has always been *the*

demand of outward uniformity as the price of visible unity? On the one side, the condition is yielding to Diocesan Episcopacy; on the other side, this condition is declined, on the alleged ground of conscientious objections to it. One class of Christians have, as a body, made an almost exclusive claim, (and practically entirely so,) to be *the church*, condemning all nonconformity to their form and order; though, as we have seen, on various grounds;—while other classes, holding other views, have urged their own claim to the right of private judgment, the grand fundamental principle of the Reformation. On the question of church-government, they have conceded this right to all other Christians; and have strenuously contended for it as inalienable. For in no one of these classes, is their own view of this point regarded as *essential* to unity.*

The solitary claim of Diocesan Episcopacy, among the Protestant platforms of church-government existing in England, to be *essential* to unity—to be the *only* form with which the church of Christ can, in this country, visibly consist,—or at least the form under which alone its officers and sacraments ought to be fully recognised,—is too serious in its effects, past, present, and to come, on

* These facts will be generally admitted by those who are acquainted with the history of religion in England.

the entire complexion of religion, to pass without remark. Nor can a claim so important in its bearings and results, be admitted as conclusive, without a warrant plainly bearing the stamp of heaven.

Can this exclusive claim, then, be divinely sustained? Is there scripture ground for making the episcopal form of church-government, and especially the *diocesan* form, *essential* to unity; and for declining to hold fraternal union with other Christians, on the same principles which allow *them* to retain their conscientious distinctions, and yet to be united in visible fellowship,—as in visiting each others sanctuaries, in the interchange of ministerial services, and in hearty co-operation to promote every good work? The question is not, now, it may be repeated, the comparative merits of particular systems. On the principles previously laid down,* it cannot reasonably be doubted that the true church has existed under various forms of outward discipline. What scripture-ground is there, then, for not joining, hand and heart, with good men of every name; or why should the episcopal form claim to be exclusive?

On the names used in the New Testament for

* See page 39; quotation from the ‘Articles of Religion.’

church-officers, some of the most distinguished supporters of Episcopacy have laid no stress. For example, Bishop Burnet,—also Doctors Reynolds and Holland, formerly Professors of Divinity at Oxford, expressly state that the terms ‘bishop’ and ‘presbyter’ mean the same thing. Bishop Hoadley, Dr. Hammond, and many others, of whom some have already been mentioned, also allow that these words are used promiscuously.¹ The same terms are declared to be synonymous, in the work entitled ‘The Institution of a Christian Man,’ published in 1536, and approved by the king, parliament, and clergy.²

And can a single passage of the New Testament be adduced, which enjoins that one bishop or presbyter must necessarily have more power than others,³ either in a single assembly of Christians, where there is more than one pastor, or among a number of associated societies? Though it should be conceded that this might naturally arise from circumstances, and that it was not unlawful,—did the apostles make it *essential*? Even episcopalian writers themselves, are not agreed that all the

¹ Dwight; Sermon 151. See also Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1; compare Tit. i. 5—7; Acts xx. 17, 28; 1 Pet. v. 1, 2.

² See Formularies of Faith; Oxon. p. 105; where see also ‘Necessary Doctrine,’ 1543. p. 281.

³ So as to be *Primus inter Pares*.

apostolic churches were framed precisely on the same model as to their details.¹

Ought outward visible unity, the grand characteristic of the church of Christ, to be suspended on the conjecture that ‘the apostles, in their last visitation, settled one of the presbyters or bishops of a place over the rest;’² whereas St. Paul, when he took leave of the elders (presbyters³) of Ephesus, and told them they should see his ‘face no more,’ does not appear to have uttered a word respecting any such officer, either in reference to

¹ ‘Bishop Pearson (Vindic. Ignatianæ) is of opinion that, in some churches, there were bishops and not presbyters; in others, presbyters and not bishops;—but that the larger communities had all the three orders. Mosheim, however, considers the two terms as undoubtedly applied to the same order of men; and such is the plain interpretation of the Scripture passages.—See Hinds’s Early Prog. Christ. vol. i. p. 349, etc.’—Waddington’s Hist. of the Church, 1833, p. 21, note.

The same writer, after expressing his opinion that in some instances presidents were appointed over churches ‘by an apostle;’ adds, ‘the church of Corinth seems indeed to have been the only exception. Till the date of St. Clement’s Epistle, (ch. 47) its government had been clearly presbyterial, and we do not learn the exact moment of the change.—See Hinds’s Early Church, vol. ii. p. 163, and Bingham, b. ii. c. 1.’ Waddington’s Hist. Ibid.

² See Doddridge’s Lect. 1822. ii. 270.

³ πρεσβυτέρους. Acts xx. 17.

his own duty of ruling, or that of the elders in obeying; but only addresses the elders themselves, bidding them ‘take heed to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers,’ or bishops?¹

The epistles to the Seven Asian Churches, among which that in Ephesus is included, were each addressed to an individual called the *angel*,² whom some have supposed to be a diocesan bishop; but of this no evidence is adduced. The term, however, plainly indicates that, at this time, some one individual had the lead in each of these

¹ ἐπισκόπους. Acts xx. 28.

The *Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, (vol. x. p. 749,) though maintaining Episcopacy in a previous chapter on the same subject, (Ecclesiastical History,) has the following remarks. ‘At the period of St. Paul’s summons to the church of Ephesus, no such order (that of bishops) could have existed there; and if not in so large and important a church, probably nowhere. The *title* cannot imply it, for it is one used for all the presbyters of Ephesus; and their number proves that he was not addressing bishops, for they came from one church. Again, although the word occurs elsewhere in St. Paul’s *Epistles*, it cannot intend one chief governor of any church; because his *Epistles* are addressed to the church as bodies of men in whom all authority was vested. The term bishop became afterwards appropriated to an order, of which we cannot infer the existence certainly from any expression of St. Luke.’

² Rev. ii.

churches. We have seen that, at Ephesus, in the time of St. Paul, and probably about forty years earlier than the date of the Apocalypse, there was a plurality of pastors, but nothing is said, in the Acts, of any inequality of rank among them. It is certain the scriptures give no express rules for the *number* of office-bearers in each church. In that of Philippi, as in that of Ephesus in St. Paul's time, there was a plurality of bishops.¹ On the other hand it has been thought that 'the rules given to Timothy and Titus seem to suppose the office-bearers of a church to consist of 'the bishop and deacons,' implying singularity as to the former, and plurality as to the latter;' and that 'there appears to have been only one bishop in each of the seven churches of Asia;'² that is, one presbyter or pastor, here called the 'angel.' Unless we suppose, however, that the Christians of the seven cities were, in no case, so numerous as to require more than one pastor, the 'angel,' it is evident, must have been distinguished, in some respect, from the rest. If in any place there was a plurality of pastors, *one* of them must have possessed some kind of superiority.—This point may, perhaps, be in some measure illustrated by a reference to the Jewish church.

¹ Phil. i. 1.

² Ewing on Church Government, pp. 86, 97.

Vitringa, Lightfoot, Grotius, Selden, and others, have supposed that the order of the apostolic churches was, in all respects, precisely assimilated to that of the synagogue. That this theory, however, is too unqualified, is evident, both from fact, and from the repeated admissions even of some of its strongest advocates.¹ Still, it was very natural that the general plan and *idea* of the first Christian societies should be, to a considerable extent, derived from the Jewish church.² Hence the adoption of Jewish terms, such as Presbyter, Presbytery,³ and the like, to denote Christian officers and functions. Neander remarks, on this subject, that the government of the Jewish synagogues, which consisted of a council of the elders of the community, would also appear the most natural wherever Christian societies were formed among the heathen, in the Roman empire; since men were accustomed, from ancient times, to see the affairs of towns administered by a senate, the assembly of the *decuriones*. ‘Accordingly, a council of elders was everywhere appointed for the management of the christian churches; not that it was strictly necessary that the elders should be

¹ See in Townsend’s N. T. vol. i. p. 164.

² Gieseler’s Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte, Bd. i. Abschn. i. cap. 2 § 25.

³ πρεσβυτέριον. Compare Acts xxii. 5, with 1 Tim. iv. 14.

the most aged persons ;—age was, here, a sign of dignity.’¹

Among the terms of office which were early transferred from the synagogue to the Christian church, was that of ‘angel’ or *messenger* ‘of the church’ or congregation; whose part it was to offer up public prayers for the people, or to deliver a message, as it were, to God on their behalf.²

¹ ‘Ein Rath der Gemeindeältesten זקנים πρεσβυτεροι, der alle gemeinschaftliche Angelegenheiten leitete. An diese Form sich anzuschliessen lag dem aus dem Judenthum heraus sich entwickelnden Christenthum natürlich am nächsten. Diese Verfassungsform musste auch, wo sich im römischen Reiche unter den Heiden Gemeinden bildeten, als die natürlichste erscheinen; denn man war ja von Alters her gewohnt die Städteangelegenheiten durch einen Senat, die Versammlung der *decuriones*, verwaltet zu sehen. . . . So wurde demnach der Leitung der Gemeinden überall ein Rath der Aeltesten vorgesetzt; es brauchten nicht gerade die den Jahren nach Aeltesten zu seyn, wenn gleich man auch auf das Alter wohl besondere Rücksicht nahm, sondern das Alter war hier Bezeichnung der Würde, wie in dem lateinischen ‘Senatus,’ im griechischen ‘γερονσια.’ Allgemeine Geschichte der Christlichen Religion und Kirche, von Dr. August Neander, Hamburg, 1825, Band i. Abtheil 1, Abschn 2. §. 283, ff.

² ‘An officer whose province it was to offer up public prayers to God for the whole congregation, was called *Sheliach Zibbor*, or the angel of the church: because, as their messenger, he spoke to God for them. Hence also,

Hence, probably, the ministers of the Asian churches are termed ‘angels;’ or if in any case there was a plurality of pastors, the appellation must have been intended to designate the individual who took the lead.

This view of the subject has been taken both by Presbyterians and Independents, as well as Episcopalians. ‘Certain it is,’ says Campbell, ‘that the very names of church-officers were borrowed from the synagogue, which had also its elders, overseers, deacons, or almoners; and amongst them one usually presided, who was called the angel of the congregation, the title given by our Lord in the Apocalypse to the presidents of christian assemblies.¹ It would be necessary, for the sake of order, that one should preside, both in the offices of religion, and in their consultations for the common good. . . . Some of the most common appellations, whereby the bishop was first distinguished, bear evident traces of this origin. He was called president, chair-

in Rev. ii. iii. the ministers of the Asiatic churches are called *angels*.’—Horne’s Introduction, vol. iii. p. 247.

See also Townsend’s N. T. p. 165; and Prideaux, apud Ewing on church-government, p. 89.

¹ Campbell Lect. vii.

N. B. The ‘angel’ must not be confounded with the ἀρχισυνάγωγος, or ruler, for of these there were several in one synagogue.—See Horne and Townsend, *ibid*.

man.¹ He was, in the presbytery, as the speaker in the house of commons, who is not of superior order to the other members of the house, but is a commoner amongst commoners, and is only, in consequence of that station, accounted the first among those of his own rank. . . . A letter to the congregation might very naturally be directed to him who possessed the first place, and presided among them. . . . It is likely that John, in the direction of the epistles to the seven churches, availed himself of a distinction, which had subsisted from the beginning; but as it implied no difference in order and power, was too inconsiderable to be noticed in the history.’² Doddridge remarks that the angels of the churches ‘might be no more than pastors of single congregations with their proper assistants;’³ and he paraphrases the term by ‘presiding minister,’ and ‘presiding officer.’

Episcopacy in the sense of a certain *precedency* among co-pastors, conceded to years, or to piety and talent, would, therefore, be admitted by those who are not Episcopalians, as a mode likely to have prevailed in the early church, though no

¹ ‘He was not only called προεσως, but προεδρος, president, chairman: and by periphrasis the presbyters were called δι εκ δευτερου θρονου, they who possessed the second seat or throne, as the bishop was πρωτοκαθεδρος, he who possessed the first.’—Campbell, Lect. v.

² Ibid.

³ Doddridge, Lect. 196.

divine ordinance can be found rendering any definite degree of superiority essential, and generally binding in the church. Many Episcopalians, however, would consider that the 'angel' belonged to a *third*, and the highest *order*; that he was the principal ecclesiastical overseer or bishop, by way of excellency, the overseer not only of the church, but also of its 'pastors or presbyters;'¹ and this, by 'divine appointment.'² But as no evidence is brought from scripture, that any official superiority among pastors was intended to be permanent in the church, further than human prudence, subject always to the general principles of Christianity, might dictate,—the attempt to render a marked and wide distinction of rank *essential*, may safely be pronounced inconsistent with the spirit and genius of the apostolical institution.

Further: it has been supposed that James, Timothy, and Titus, were divinely designed to be the first examples of the *third order* of ministers,—an order, who were, in all future time, to possess functions distinct from those of ordinary pastors, and to exercise over them a certain authority and control. Were the above apostolic men, then, *Diocesan Bishops*? and is the admission

¹ Gauntlett on the Book of Revelation, 1821. p. 18.

² 'The divine and simple appointment of bishop, priest, and deacon,' etc.—Townsend's N. T., vol. ii. p. 165.

of these supposed divine precedents to be made a term of visible unity in the church of Christ?

It has never been proved, we may venture to say, that Timothy and Titus were other than *evangelists*, or itinerant assistants to the apostles, possessed of extraordinary and temporary functions. That this was their true description, is the conclusion of no less eminent and learned an advocate for Episcopacy than WHITBY. After stating that he ‘can find nothing in any writer of the first three centuries, nor any intimation that they (Timothy and Titus) bore the name of bishops,’ he adds, ‘I assert that if by saying Timothy and Titus were Bishops, the one of Ephesus, the other of Crete, we understand that they took upon them these Churches or Dioceses, as their fixed and peculiar charge, in which they were to preside for the term of life, I believe that Timothy and Titus were not thus Bishops. For 1st. Both Timothy and Titus were evangelists, and therefore were to do the work of an evangelist. Now the work of an evangelist, saith Eusebius, was this, to lay the foundations of the faith in barbarous nations, to constitute them Pastors, and having committed to them the cultivating of these new plantations, they passed to other countries and nations. 2ndly. As for Titus, he was only left at Crete to ordain Elders in every city, and to set in order the things that were wanting; having, therefore, done that

work, he had done all that was assigned him in that station: And, therefore, St. Paul sends for him the very next year to Nicopolis. Tit. iii. 12. And so, according to Bishop Pearson's Chronology, he was left at Crete, A.D. 64, and sent from thence A.D. 65, and returned thither, as the ancients conjecture, after the death of St. Paul.'

'As for Timothy, St. Paul saith he exhorted him to abide at Ephesus, when he went into Macedonia. Now, as he writes to the Church of Philippi, A.D. 62, that he hoped to be shortly with them, so saith Bishop Pearson, he went thither A.D. 64, and wrote his first Epistle to him, A.D. 63. Two years after this, he sends for him to Rome, 2 Tim. iv. 9. 21. and there he continued, as the ancients conjecture, till the martyrdom of St. Paul. . . . Now I confess, that these two instances absolutely taken, afford us no convincing arguments for a settled Diocesan Episcopacy, because there is nothing which proves they (Timothy and Titus) did, or were to exercise these acts of government rather as Bishops than Evangelists.'¹

Again, supposing that James, 'the Lord's brother,' (cousin,) who appears to have remained at Jerusalem, was not the son of Alphæus, and therefore *not* one of the twelve,²—what evidence have

¹ Whitby on the New Testament, Preface to Titus.

² So Eusebius, Jerom, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, and Theodoret. This James could not

we that his office was more than temporary, being adapted to the existing circumstances of the parent church?—that he was anything in short, but the *stationary agent* of the apostles in their absence from Jerusalem? Is it clear that his functions were similar to those of a modern bishop? * or that he was intended to be a divinely-appointed example of Episcopacy to all future ages? That the first inspired missionaries of the gospel should frequently intrust some *one* known and tried individual with the nurture of a church which they had planted, was perfectly natural, often perhaps necessary: modern and ordinary missionaries must frequently do the same. Yet what argument is this,—of an intention to establish, in the church of Christ, the permanent and essential ordinance of an *imparity of order* among presbyters or ministers; no intimation whatever of anything of the kind being found in the doctrines or precepts

have been the son of Zebedee; compare Matt. x. 2, 3; Acts xii. 2. xv. 13.

* Dr. Burton, having previously remarked ‘we know little of the constitution of the primitive church,’ and speaking in another passage of James, as ‘Bishop of Jerusalem,’ says, ‘I by no means intend to affirm that the office which he bore was analogous to that of bishop in later times.’ Lectures upon the Ecclesiastical History of the first century. By the Rev. Edward Burton, D.D., Regius Professor of Divinity, and Canon of Christ Church. Oxford. 1831. pp. 95, 102.

of the New Testament? As well surely, might it be argued, in the case of any Society for promoting a benevolent object, that because the founders employed some of their own friends to make the first arrangements, and to select the first agents, they intended, by so doing, to announce to the world, that a distinct and thoroughly-defined subordination of rank, in the board of management or committee, the *authoritative control* of one order of its members over another, was absolutely necessary, in all future time, to the objects, or perhaps the existence of the Society.

It is certain that we have no divine warrant for a standing order of ministers in the church, who are to exercise such control over inferior brethren, or over the assemblies in which they preside. That the primitive churches were each under its own self-government, and free from all external human authority, is the unanimous testimony of ecclesiastical antiquity, and is admitted by men of all parties. And with regard to the office of Timothy and Titus, or of James,—their functions were probably only such as any ordinary pastor might in *their* circumstances have sustained, without any distinctive change in his official character or relation to the apostolic church. Will it be contended, then, that those who are not able to perceive, in these three plain, humble missionaries and evangelists of Jesus, the prototypes of hierarchical dignity

and diocesan power, and who cannot regard them as having been placed, by any apostolic ordinance, at so great a distance as is supposed, from all their ministerial brethren,—ought, on this account, to be regarded as sinning against the institution of Christ, as aliens from the unity of the faith, and unworthy of being recognised as christian brethren, or as ministers fitted to preach, and to be accredited everywhere, throughout the universal church?

Surely the absence of all decisive scripture-authority in his favour, ought, at least, to prevent the Episcopalian Christian from demanding for his system of church-government, a preference on the ground of *divine right*. Rather should he, like Protestant Christians of other denominations in the community, be content to admit the universal right of judging, as in the presence of God, of the path of duty, in whatever direction it may lead, over this controverted ground; while all, though differing on ecclesiastical polity, *agree* to differ; freely and practically recognising each others ministerial character, if ministers; and as Christians, meeting on the common level of unity in Christ; the hateful claim of precedence,—the fond question ‘Who shall be the greatest?’* the ancient germ of strife among christian brethren, being for ever laid aside.

* Luke ix. 46.

SECTION IV.

THE TESTIMONY OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, IN
REFERENCE TO CHURCH-GOVERNMENT.

If there be nothing in the New Testament which authorises any class of Christ's followers to make their own views of external church-order essential to unity, may not the appeal be made to ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY? Do we not, here, find a veracious interpreter of what is left doubtful in the sacred record? and is there not placed before our eyes, the very image and exemplification of that form and order, which, though it may seem to have been but faintly traced by the apostles, yet stands out in full and bold relief, in the actual practice of those who came immediately after them,—or who were even their contemporaries? Is not the voice of the earliest antiquity, after the apostolic age, decisive of the right of Episcopalian Christians to demand the adoption of *their* form, as an indispensable condition of that entire christian equality, which is most fitted to prevent 'envyings,' 'uncharitableness,' and 'pride,' and best harmonizes with Christ's law, that all his followers are 'brethren?'

In the fifth number of 'Tracts for the Times,'

* Matt. xxiii. 8.

the argument for divine right, founded on terms or *names*, appears not to be insisted on, but only that which is derived from the supposed ‘ powers with which the Apostles, or rather the Holy Ghost, by their means, invested those who were to bear rule in the church in times when they themselves should have gone to their reward. Those times came.—St. John, the last of the glorious company of the apostles, entered into his rest, and the church found itself committed, under Heaven, entirely to the charge of the three established orders of its ministers. To each of these a specific title was now ascribed, and applied with greater exactness than before. The title Bishop, which had at first been used indifferently with Elder, became the exclusive property of the highest class of functionaries, the colleagues of Timothy and Titus.’ *

This passage would seem to transfer the final appeal for the exclusive claim of Episcopacy, partly at least, to ecclesiastical history. Now it should be remembered, preliminarily, that the Fathers are but *human witnesses*. Their religious *opinions* must be judged of by the rule of scripture, and their testimony to *facts* subjected, as the case may allow, to the ordinary laws of moral evidence. In proportion as the simplicity of the gospel became corrupted, (and corruption began early to develop itself,) it is evident, from the

* Tracts for the Times, No. 5. p. 8.

writings of these good men, that their own minds did not escape injury.

Tertullian,¹ for instance, who died early in the third century, writes, that external *unction*, after baptism, ‘spiritually profits.’ So also says Cyprian,² who lived to about the middle of the same century. Of this anointing, *signation* or signing with the cross, was a part,—‘that the soul may be fortified,’ says Tertullian.³ Nor should it be forgotten that this Father was, during a considerable part of his life, infected with the fanaticism of Montanus.⁴ According to Crescens, and other bishops who were present at the synod of Carthage, about the year 256, *exorcism* was judged necessary in certain cases, previously to baptism.⁵ Indeed this practice appears to have obtained,

¹ In nobis carnaliter currit unctio, sed spiritualiter proficit.—Tertull. de Baptismo.

² Ut accepto Chrismate habere in se gratiam Christi possit.—Cyprian. Epist. 70. § 3.

³ Caro signatur ut anima muniatur.—Tertull. de Resurrect. Carnis.

⁴ Montanus gave out that the promise of the Holy Spirit was accomplished in him and his associates, rather than in the Apostles. He held a severe ascetic discipline, in connection with extravagant raptures, and pretensions to inspiration. See Waddington’s Ch. Hist. p. 69. Bp. Kaye on Tertullian, p. 29.

⁵ Non ante ingredi, nisi exorcizati et baptizati fuerint. Act. Concil. Carthag. apud Cyprian.

before the end of the second century. Contrary to scripture-fact,¹ and the genius of the apostolic doctrine, *baptism, in itself*,² was held to possess a mysterious sacramental efficacy. The use of *prayers* and *oblations for the dead*,³ also became very common about this period.

Again, Clement of Alexandria, and his contemporary Tertullian, as also Origen, attach some importance to *praying towards the east*;⁴ which observance caused a report among the heathen, that the Christians worshipped the Sun.⁵ Tertullian says, that on Lord's-Days, and at certain festivals,

¹ *E. g.* Simon Magus. Acts. viii.; compare 1 Pet. iii. 21; Tit. iii. 5. Phil. iii. 3.

² Aqua sacerdotis prece in ecclesia sanctificata abluit delicta.—Sedatus in Act. Concil. Carthag. apud Cyprian.—Tertull de Bapt.-Cypr. Epist. 70. § 2.

³ Pro cujus spiritu postulas, pro qua (uxore) oblationes annuas reddis.—Tertull. de Exhort. Castitat. c. 11.

Oblationes pro defunctis annua die facimus.—Tertull. de Coron. Mil. c. 3.

⁴ Πρὸς τὴν ἑωθινὴν ἀνατολὴν αἱ ἐυχαι.—Clemens Alex. Strom. lib. 7.

Also Tertull. Apol. c. 16; and Origen de Oratione, § 21.

Justin Martyr quotes the Septuagint, which, in Zech. vi. 12, renders the Hebrew מִזְרָא (germen) by ἀνατολή.—Justin read, 'Behold the man whose name is the *East*.' Dial. cum Tryphon.

⁵ Inde suspicio, etc. Tertull. Apol., c. 16.

it is a *sin to worship kneeling*.¹ In Africa, *infant communion* was practised; and Cyprian records an instance of the wine being forcibly poured down an infant's throat by the deacon.² Clarus, at the above synod of Carthage, speaking of the apostles of Christ, and of his having 'transmitted to them alone the *power given to himself* by the Father,' adds, 'whom we have succeeded, governing the church of the Lord, by the *same power*.'³

These instances, out of a multitude, may suffice to evince the necessity of caution in forming our estimate, both of the *opinions* and the *practices* of the Fathers. We should remember that, early as these good men lived after the apostolic age, they were *uninspired*. It must, also, be borne in mind, that the embryos of various doctrinal errors, were already in existence, as we learn from the apostolical epistles, long before the

¹ Die Dominico nefas ducimus de geniculis adorare, *etc.* Tertull. De Coron. Milit.

² Diaconus, reluctanti licet, de sacramento calicis infudit. Cypr. De Lapsis. § 20.

³ Quibus (apostolis) nos successimus, eadem potestate ecclesiam Domini gubernantes. Act. Concil. Carthag. apud Cypr. Language of the same kind is used by several others; and though it may sometimes be interpreted in a more moderate sense, yet it is evident that a claim to divine right, if not almost to divine power, had become not uncommon, in the third century.

end of the first century; and that by the middle of the second, the hydra of heresy and corruption was no longer a snake in the grass. Is it, then, incredible, that some who even opposed these heresies, might fall into *other* errors? Nay, their very zeal against heresy, honest though it was, might be the occasion of an overweening self-importance; and the men who would have died for truth, might readily be betrayed (such is human nature) into a confidence, in which the distinction was nice, and easily lost sight of, between themselves and their cause. This is the less wonderful, when we remember that the ‘bath of blood,’ and the ‘baptism by fire,’ were supposed to cancel all sins.¹

It is evident that the Fathers often adopted traditionary accounts without sufficient caution. Witness the clashing statements which may be collected from Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and others, concerning the succession of the bishops of Rome and Antioch.² When, however, they relate facts, as cotemporary or personal witnesses, their testimony is entitled to our respect. What evidence, then, do they afford, in the absence of that of scripture, that Episcopacy

¹ See Gieseler's Kirchengeschichte, Bd. i. Abschn. 3. cap. 3. § 52.

² Apud Dwight, Serm. 151.

was delivered to the church by the apostles, and made *essential* to its unity and order ?

Clement of Rome,¹ near the close of the first century, wrote an epistle,² entitled, ‘ From the church of God at Rome, to the church of God at Corinth.’ In this valuable document, probably the earliest of uninspired christian antiquity, the author states that ‘ the apostles constituted the first-fruits of their ministry, *bishops and deacons of those who should believe.*’³ In other passages, these bishops are called, ‘ presbyters ;’ and it is the express design of this epistle to conciliate the people towards them, and to promote order in the society : for it appears that divisions had again agitated the Corinthian church, and that some of the presbyters had been improperly removed from their charge.⁴ The language employed is that of exhortation, not of authority ; but while the just rights of the presbyters are asserted, *there is not a word, in the whole of this long letter, bearing the*

¹ See Phil. iv. 3.

² “ This epistle is spoken of by the ancients, as an epistle acknowledged by all ; and, as Irenæus well represents its value, ‘ written by Clement, who had seen the blessed apostles, and conversed with them ; who had the preaching of the apostles still sounding in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes.’” Paley’s Evidences. Part i. ch. x.

³ εἰς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους. Clement. Epist. ad Cor.

⁴ ἀπο τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς. Ibid.

slightest allusion to any superior presbyter or bishop, who (as in after-times) was the official head and ruler of the other functionaries, as well as of the people. Yet it is evident that *his* authority would, in the given case, have been outraged *more than that of any other person*; and one would suppose that he could not have failed of being noticed in some way, had such an individual then existed. Again, had the Corinthian church been regarded by Clement, and the church at Rome, as deficient in the theory of its constitution, from not having conformed to an exclusive, apostolical form of church-government, or from having departed from that form, would not this faithful man have exhorted the church to the duty of complying with the divine ordinance?

What so natural as that he should propose *this*, as a cure divinely adapted to heal those dissensions, which now, and not for the first time, unhappily, existed in this church?—that he should inform the Corinthian Christians, that they could not *expect* the spirit of peace, till they obeyed the *order appointed by Christ*? How unaccountable, on the principle of Episcopacy being of divine right, that while Clement drew arguments from the power with which the presbyters themselves were invested, he should wholly overlook the one *supreme authority*, if such there were; or, if there were no such authority, that he should fail to insist

on the importance of its being immediately constituted! Whatever were the footing on which Clement himself stood with respect to the Roman church, certain it is, Episcopacy derives no support from his epistle to the Corinthians. Nor do we read of this church having become episcopal, till beyond the middle of the second century.¹

The question relating to the genuineness of the epistles ascribed to Ignatius, which are assigned to an early date in the second century,² has been

1 'Till the date of St. Clement's epistle (ch. 47) its government (that of the church at Corinth) had been clearly presbyterial; and we do not learn the exact moment of the change. See Hinds's *Early Church*, Vol. ii. p. 163; and Bingham, b. ii. c. 1.' *History of the Church*, by the Rev. G. Waddington, M.A. Prebendary of Chester, p. 21.

'The episcopal form of government was clearly not yet here established, probably as being adverse to the republican spirit of Greece. About seventy years after these dissensions, we find them (the converts of Corinth) flourishing under the direction of a pious and learned bishop, Dionysius.' *Ibid.* p. 12.

² Basnage considers the time of Ignatius's martyrdom, as among the 'obscurities of chronology.'—(*Hist. Polit. Eccles. ann. 107. Sect. 6.*)—Tillemont, Du Pin, Cave, Lardner, and Waddington, fix this event in the year 107. The *Encyc. Metrop.* places it in 108. Le Clerc, Pearson, Page, Fabricius, and Gieseler, say 116. 'Le savant Guill. Lloyd a démontré que cet évènement ne peut avoir eu lieu bien avant l'an 116.' *Biog. Univers. Tom. 21ème.*

much blended with the controversy on church-government. Even the *smaller* forms¹ of these letters, published nearly two centuries ago, from a manuscript in the Medicean library at Florence, and which are regarded as the more genuine, have so perplexed the learned, in consequence of the singularity of their tone and phraseology, that men of various opinions as to ecclesiastical discipline, have, on the one hand, concurred in receiving them,—and, on the other, in regarding them as furnishing very questionable evidence.² Lardner

¹ First published, by Is. Vossius, Amstel. 1646. Usher's edition is dated 1647.

² 'Though the shorter epistles are on many accounts preferable, (to the larger forms,) yet I will not affirm that they have undergone no alteration at all.'—Jortin's *Remarks on Eccles. Hist.* vol. i. p. 361.

'I cannot help looking on the authenticity of the epistle (of Ignatius) to Polycarp, as extremely dubious; and indeed the whole question relating to the epistles of St. Ignatius in general, seems to me to be embarrassed with many difficulties.'—Mosheim's *Eccl. Hist.* vol. i. ch. ii. 20.

'We may discover the animated piety of the author, through the interpolations with which the party zealots of after times have disfigured them.—Learned and candid critics, who have distinguished and rejected these (interpolations and corruptions) still leave us much behind of undisputed origin,'—Waddington's *Hist.* pp. 7. 72.

'It would not be easy to say how we could with safety found a decision on an author with whose works transcri-

supposes the smaller forms to be, in the main, genuine ;¹ while Whiston meets with little support among the moderns, in contending that the *larger* forms, or those which are usually termed the *interpolated epistles*, are the true originals.² The style of both forms is certainly very different from that which prevails in the apostolical epistles. In the latter, the term ‘church’ is never used in reference to a province ; while Ignatius repeatedly bears, in the judgment of both sides, have made so free.’—Campbell, Lect. vi.

Milner, speaking of the epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, intimates that it labours ‘under all the disadvantages of a style bloated with Asiatic tumour, and still more perhaps of a text very corrupt :—the author, however, must mean *originally* corrupt, as he, elsewhere, is of opinion that Vossius and Usher have so ‘distinguished the genuine from the false,’ that these Epistles are now ‘superior to all exceptions.’—Milner’s Hist. revised by Dean Milner, 1812. vol. i. pp. 156. 159.

‘It is by no means clear,’ says an Episcopalian writer, in the Encyclopædia Metropolitana, ‘that the imposture practised on what we call the *Interpolated Epistles*, was not an after attempt to carry too far, what had been more sparingly, and more successfully effected in the *Shorter Epistles*, and that the genuine epistles themselves have been tampered with. The temptation to such a proceeding was strong, and there are certainly not a few internal marks that it was practised.’—Encyc. Metrop. vol. x. p. 764.

¹ Lardner’s Works, vol. ii. p. 68.

² Whiston’s Dissertation upon Ignatius, p. 1.

speaks of *the church which is in Syria*.¹ But if there be one feature of these epistles more strikingly obvious than another, it is the aim to uphold ecclesiastical authority, by perpetually enforcing implicit submission to the bishop, the presbyters, and the deacons.²

In the *larger* forms, the language is sometimes that of downright Romanism. ‘Let governors be obedient to Cæsar; soldiers to governors; deacons to presbyters, as to priests;³ and let presbyters, and deacons, and the rest of the clergy,⁴ together with all the people, and the soldiers, and *Cæsar* himself, *be obedient to the bishop*.’ In the *smaller* and more genuine forms, are such exhortations as the following: ‘Give heed to the bishop,

¹ This expression, which is quite different from the phraseology of the New Testament, and from the general usage of the first three centuries, occurs five times in the ‘*Smaller*’ epistles of Ignatius. Cyprian once employs the word church in the same way; (In provincia, Africa et Numidia ecclesiam Domini. Epist. 71. § 4:) ‘else’ says King, ‘I do not remember that ever I met with it in this sense.’ Enquiry, Part i. ch. i.

² It is remarkable, that in his epistle to the Romans, alone, Ignatius does not make a single allusion, in either the larger, or the smaller forms, to the bishop, or to any other church-officer. He once in this epistle speaks of himself as ‘bishop of Syria.’

³ ὡς ἱερεῦσιν, (as some MSS. read,) is preferred by Usher and Whiston, to ἀρχιερεῦσιν. Ignat. Epist. ad Philadelph.

⁴ ὁ λοιπὸς κλήρος. Ibid.

that God, also, may give heed to you. I pledge my life¹ for theirs, who are subject to the bishop, presbyters, deacons. Let my part in God be with them.'—'Whereas you are subject to your bishop, as to Jesus Christ, you appear to me to live, not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ.'²—'Let all reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ;³ and the bishop as though he were the Son of the Father;⁴ and the presbyters as the Sanhedrim of God, and as though they were the company of the apostles. Without these, the name of church does not exist.'⁵ The latter sentiment may, perhaps, be understood to refer to the regular organization of a body of Christians; yet its tendency and spirit seem obviously different from that of our Saviour's declaration, 'Wherever

¹ αἱ τίψυχον ἐγώ. Ignat. Epist. ad Polycarp.

² Ignat. Epist. ad Trall.

³ Cotelierius (S. S. Patrum Apostol. Opera) proposes to read ὡς ἐντολὴν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; as the 'command of Jesus Christ.'⁴ He also suggests καὶ ἐπίσκοπον ὡς ὄντα τύπον τοῦ πατρὸς, 'the bishop as *being the image* of the Father.' The text is ὡς καὶ τὸν ἐπίσκοπον, ὄντα υἱὸν τοῦ πατρὸς: if the ὡς were placed before ὄντα, this second clause of the sentence would be exactly analogous to the first, (τοὺς διακόνους ὡς Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.) Ignat. Epist. ad Trall.

⁵ ἐκκλησία οὐ καλεῖται. Ibid. In the larger form, this sentiment is thus expressed: 'Without these (the bishop, presbyters, and deacons,) there is no elect church, no collection of saints, no assembly of holy persons.' Ibid.

two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them.’¹ And if Tertullian is to be regarded as discovering a trait of Montanism, in saying that ‘three laymen may compose a church,’² surely the language of Ignatius, of which many other examples,³ similar to the above, might be given, reminds us more of the doctrine of passive obedience to ecclesiastical authority, adopted by the Roman church when it had become *Romish*, than of the sayings of Christ, or the exhortations

¹ Matt. xviii. 20.

² See Bp. Kaye on Tertullian, pp. 48, 231 ; compare p. 61.

³ Among these are the following: ‘Let us be careful that we do not set ourselves against the bishop, that we may be subject to God.’—‘It is evident that we ought to look upon the bishop, even as upon the Lord himself.’ *Epist. ad Ephes.*—‘In whom (Sotio the deacon) I rejoice, because he is subject to his bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ.’—‘It will become you to yield all reverence to him (the bishop) according to the power of God the Father.’—‘It will behove you to obey him without any hypocrisy.’—‘Your bishop presiding in the place of God, and your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles.’—‘Do nothing without the bishop, and the presbyters. Do not endeavour to let anything appear rational to yourselves, apart.’—‘Be subject to your bishop.’ *Ad Magnes.* ‘Without your bishop you should do nothing: also be subject to your presbyters, as to the apostles of Jesus Christ.’—‘He who does anything without the bishop, the

of his apostles.'¹ St. Paul addresses his epistles to the Corinthian Christians, 'to the *church* of God which is at Corinth,' in which even episcopalian historians admit that there is no trace of a bishop till beyond the middle of the second century :² but Ignatius, it seems, would have denied to these Christians, what an inspired apostle thought fit to grant them, the 'name of a church' of Christ.

On the supposition that the shorter forms of these epistles, notwithstanding the singularity of their phraseology, are the genuine writings of Ignatius, it is evident that bishops had become a distinct order from presbyters, at least in Asia Minor, and at Antioch, early in the second century. That the distinction prevailed, generally, before the close of that century, is denied by no candid historian, whatever his opinions of the epistles of Ignatius.³ Yet it should be re-

presbytery, and the deacons, is not pure in his conscience.'

Ad Trall.—These examples are all taken from the *shorter* forms.

¹ 'The epistles attributed to Ignatius are the earliest writings which countenance such claims, ('respecting the exalted and irresistible nature of Episcopal authority;') and they were afterwards more boldly advocated by Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage.'—Waddington's *Hist.* p. 24, note.

See Campbell's *Lectures*, 1815. vol. i. pp. 184—199.

² See page 128, note 1.

³ Pius, bishop of Rome, near the middle of the second

membered that the bishops, here so often mentioned, are clearly not *diocesans*. All the allusions to church-government are, without exception, to that which is *internal*. The bishop is, indisputably, the chief pastor of a congregation. His power, too, notwithstanding the lofty terms in which it is spoken of, is far from being exclusive of that even of the people, not to say the presbyters. The acts of the people are repeatedly recognised;* and the bishop is by no means an independent governor. It is evident that the epistles ascribed to Ignatius insist on the apostolical origin of congregational episcopacy, or the official superiority of one presbyter over the rest, and over the whole society; but it is equally manifest that, from these

century, says in one of his letters to Justus, bishop of Vienna, ‘Let the presbyters and the deacons respect you, *not as their superior, but as the minister of Christ* ;’ (non ut majorem, sed ut ministrum Christi observent.) How different this from the language of Ignatius; and from language that would have been employed at Rome in the fourth or fifth century! These words, says Campbell, ‘at the same time that they mark the distinction, show it to be but in its infancy.’ Lect. vi.

* ‘I write to you by Burrhus, whom ye sent’ (ὁν ἀπεστέιλατε.) Epist. ad Smyrn.

‘It is proper that your church should elect a worthy delegate,’ etc. (χειροτονῆσαι τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ὑμῶν θεοπροσβύτην.) Ibid.

‘It is proper for ye, being a church of God, to elect a deacon (χειροτονῆσαι διάκονον) to go (to Antioch) as a mes-

documents, the divine right of *Diocesan* Episcopacy derives no support.

We have seen that there is no evidence that Episcopacy was introduced at Corinth before the middle of the second century, or later.¹ Nor do any traces of its existence at Philippi,² appear, at the time when Polycarp wrote his epistle to the church in that city; soon after the martyrdom of Ignatius. On the principle that, in this church, bishops and presbyters were, as yet, *the same*, the phraseology of this letter, with regard to church-government, entirely agrees with that of St. Paul, who addressed the ‘bishops and deacons’ of this church, together with the whole body.³ In Polycarp’s letter, the duties and qualifications of the presbyters and deacons are separately treated of, and, in the ancient Latin version of that part of the original which is lost, the delinquency of a presbyter is alluded to;⁴ but nothing is said, through-

senger.’ The larger form has it, ‘to choose a bishop,’ (χειροτονῆσαι ἐπίσκοπον.) Epist. ad Philad.

‘As also some of the neighbouring churches have sent their bishops, and others presbyters and deacons.’ Ibid.

¹ Waddington’s Hist. p. 12—See also Paley’s Evidences. Part i. ch. x. sect. 1.

² ‘Theodoret calls Epaphroditus bishop of Philippi; (in Phil. iv. 18.) but there is no evidence of this.’—Dr. Burton, Lecture ix.

³ Phil. i. 1.

⁴ Contristatus sum pro *Valente* qui presbyter factus

out the epistle, of any superior officer. The duties of the people, also, are continually brought forward; and they are, once, solemnly exhorted to 'be subject to the presbyters and deacons.'* But no

est aliquando apud vos.—Polycarp. cum Annotat. Thomæ Smithi, Oxon. 1709.

* ὡς θεῷ καὶ Χριστῷ, 'as to God and Christ.' Ibid.—This language, it must be allowed, is not unlike that of the epistles of Ignatius, as to the *mode* of asserting obedience to official authority. In Ignatius, however, such language is incessant: *here*, it is an exception, being the only example of the kind in the whole epistle, and quite isolated both from the preceding and the succeeding contexts.

Doubtless, the apostles, in their references to the subject of Ecclesiastical obedience, use a different style from that which appears even in these documents of the second century: 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves.—Receive him in the Lord—hold such in reputation—We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.—Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God—whose faith follow.'—Heb. xiii. 17. Phil. ii. 29, 30. 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 7. See pages 131. 132. 133.

It must be confessed that the spirit of *human authority*, enforcing submission in terms unknown to the Apostles, would (so far as the documents of the time, received as uninterpolated, testify) appear soon to have begun to blend itself with the true efficient principle of all power and all obedience in the church,—namely, charity.—'The first century was the age of Christ and the Apos-

mention occurs of the functions of any *supreme* presbyter, or of the regard due to him, or of the existence of any such person. Is it likely that such an omission as *this*, which occurs also in the letter of Clement to the Corinthians, would have been found in an epistle addressed to any christian church, in the third century? and do not these two valuable fragments of ecclesiastical antiquity clearly indicate that Episcopacy was, at least, not regarded as *essential* to the recognition of a professedly christian church, by apostolic men? Both at Philippi, and at Corinth, it is possible that the co-pastors of the church may have been on an entire equality:—but of this we cannot be certain. It was, perhaps, more natural that one among a number should, either from age, or other circumstances, be regarded as the leading minister. If this practice did not, at first, prevail in the churches, it undoubtedly soon became general. We have, however, no trace of it, hitherto, in the cases of Philippi and Corinth.

Polycarp, like Ignatius and Clement, was contemporary with the apostles. He was, there is little doubt, the ‘angel of the church in Smyrna.’*

cles; the next fifty years, we may consider as that of the Apostolical Fathers, enlightened by some lingering rays of the departed glory, which were successively and insensibly withdrawn.’—Waddington’s Hist. p. 73, note.

* Rev. ii. 8.

His epistle is entitled ‘From Polycarp and the presbyters with him, to the church of God which sojourns¹ at Philippi,’—language which clearly implies that this venerable disciple of St. John *took the lead* in the church at Smyrna, but which still admits of considerable latitude of interpretation with respect to the *nature* of his superiority. Irenæus,² indeed, expressly says that Polycarp was made *bishop* of the church in Smyrna.³ But it is acknowledged by Bishop Pearson, that Irenæus and others of his time, when they speak of those who had preceded them, frequently interchange the terms presbyter and bishop.⁴ This fact would accord with the idea—that whatever distinction existed in the *ministry*, among those who followed the apostles, it was, originally, but circumstantial, and not marked by any peculiar prerogatives, such as to render one of the presbyters, or bishops, of a separate and more exalted *order* than the rest, as in after times.⁵

The question which has, here, divided Chris-

¹ παροικύουσα (dwelling together as neighbours,) Polycarp. Epist. ad Philipp.

² Bishop of Lyons, from 177 to 202.—Gieseler.

³ Episcopus constitutus.—Irenæus adv. Hær. l. iii. c. 3.

⁴ Campbell, Lect. vi.

⁵ ‘As for Irenæus, I meet with no passage produced from him, to prove that bishops and presbyters were *distinct*.’—Doddridge, Lect. 195. Sect. 2.

tians, may be said to regard the *nature*, and the *necessity*, of the superiority of one minister over another, rather than the thing itself. Both those who adopt the aristocratical or Presbyterian, and the popular or Independent forms, frequently *concede* a certain precedence to age, or qualification, or priority of standing; as indeed, is commonly the case in all societies, secular or sacred. This concession naturally takes place wherever there is an assistant minister, and may occur even where there is a co-pastor. So far, Episcopacy, if so it can be called, has, we believe, often been practised, in various denominations.* The difference between other bodies of Christians in England, and the Episcopalian Church, is that the latter proceeds on the principle, either of apostolic right or precedent, or of human law, for the official and authoritative superiority of a distinct order of ministers, who are to be governors of the rest. Other bodies either suppose this kind of superiority to be unscriptural,—or, at least, by no means *essential*; and least of

* This appears to be the case at least with the modern Congregationalists, whether Pædo-baptists or Baptists. It is a question whether, in those congregations which are regularly connected with the General Unions, or the Local Associations, of these two bodies of Christians, an instance can be found, in which, in the case of there being more than one Pastor to a church, there is *no sort of impartiality* between them whatsoever.

all, that any form of church-government can lawfully be made necessary to unity by *human authority*.

Tertullian, who flourished at the end of the second, and the early part of the third century, distinctly asserts the superiority of the bishop to the presbyters and deacons,¹ which all admit then prevailed; but he states nothing which decidedly marks its extent. ‘In our assemblies,’ he says, ‘the older men of tried piety preside, having obtained this honour, not by purchase, but by their publicly-acknowledged merit.’² It is uncertain whether Tertullian here refers to the bishops alone, or to them and the presbyters conjointly:³ but whichever be the case, these words would certainly consist well with the idea of a very moderate superiority of the bishop to the presbyters; and they must, undoubtedly, be understood to refer to an authority which emanated from the Christian assembly itself. This account of the ‘older men’ who *presided* in the churches,

¹ Tert. De Baptismo, c. 17. De Fugâ in Persecut. c. 13.

² Præsident probati quique Seniores, honorem istum non pretio, sed testimonio adepti. Apol. c. 39. ‘Tertullian appears to speak of the Presidentship as conferred solely in consideration of superior age and piety.’ Bishop Kaye on Tertullian, p. 223.

Ibid. p. 235; comp. p. 223.

would tend to the conclusion—that, in Tertullian's time, the bishop was still rather a kind of leading presbyter, than one who possessed a marked and decided precedence of *order*.¹ Hence the learned and candid commentator on this Father, remarks: 'How clearly soever the distinction between the Bishops and the other orders of the Clergy may be asserted in the writings of Tertullian, they afford us little assistance in ascertaining wherein this distinction consisted.'²

Tertullian, it is true, speaks of the episcopal office as of apostolical institution, and he appears to explain his meaning by challenging the *Heretics* to show the origin of their churches, as the apostolic churches showed *theirs*, by tracing out 'the *individual* to whom the superintendence of the doctrine and discipline was first committed, by some one of the Apostles.'³ The mere fact of such superintendence, however, either in churches where there

1 'The more important Churches were (at the beginning of the third century) severally superintended by a bishop, possessed of a certain, but not very definite degree of authority.' Waddington's Hist. 1833. p. 35.

² Bishop Kaye on Tertullian. 1826. p. 234. Hilary, the Deacon, about A.D. 350, says, in his Commentary on 1 Tim. iii, 'the ordination of the bishop and the presbyter is one,' and adds, *Episcopus est qui inter presbyteros primus est.* Hilar. Comm.

³ Tertull. de Præscript. Hæret. c. 32.

might be but one pastor, or in those in which there were more, would not seem necessarily at variance with practices that may be found existing in denominations of Christians not Episcopalian.¹ This appeal of Tertullian, moreover, seems to have been chiefly made as an argument of orthodoxy,²—whatever may be thought of proving the orthodoxy of the present members of a church, by that of its original founders.

The Church of England practically recognises no ordination as valid, but that which is episcopal; for since the passing of the Act of Uniformity, which is the basis on which the Church, as now existing, was settled, in 1662, no ministers except those episcopally ordained, and even *these*, either by a bishop of her own communion, or of the Romish Church, have been admitted to preach in her pulpits. Yet, from what Cyprian, the zealous advocate for the supremacy of the episcopal order, has recorded of a letter written by Firmilian, as also from Cyprian's own words, it appears that even so late as the middle of the third century, it was not *necessary* to the pastoral office that ordination to it should be conferred by a bishop. The bishop, certainly, at this

¹ See page 140.

² On the principle that things had remained as originally instituted. See Bp. Kaye on Tertullian, pp. 229—231; and 236, note 29.

time, took the precedency in the exercise of this and other functions ; but there was no ministerial act which a presbyter¹ might not be delegated by the bishop to perform.² It appears, therefore, that, even so late as this period, the bishops did not claim any exclusive and intransferable prerogative. Subsequently, as the episcopal power went on increasing, the principle that, under certain circumstances, presbyters might ordain, ceased by ecclesiastical law.

Again, if the doctrine of *apostolical succession* in the ministry, were of importance to the unity of the church of Christ, not only the ministers of almost all the foreign churches, but all those who have succeeded the English Nonconformists, and who have from them perpetuated ordination, might lay claim to the principle of apostolical descent. Under all circumstances, however, this is but a very dubious claim. At best, such descent must be derived through the corrupt channel of the great apostasy. Nor is it even agreed who were

¹ Ubi (i. e. in ecclesia) præsident majores natu, qui et ordinandi possident potestatem. Firmilian. apud Cyprian. Epist. 75. § 6. comp. Tertull. Apol. c. 39 ; and Cave's Primitive Christianity, Part i. ch. 5.

² Fungamini illic et vestris partibus et meis, *etc.* Cypr. Epist. 5—Vice mea fungamini circa gerenda ea, quæ administratio religiosa deposcit. Epist. 6. § 2.—See also King's Enquiry, Part i. ch. iv. 9 ; and Campbell, Lect. vii.

the first seven bishops of the Church of Rome. Besides, until the supposed line of apostolical succession emerges into Protestantism, it is sometimes perplexingly confused, if not obliterated, amidst contested elections, simoniacal contracts, popes and antipopes, and the nullifying decrees of councils.¹ Eusebius himself, the first regular ecclesiastical historian, and the source of the catalogues which have been drawn out for the proof of uninterrupted apostolical succession, acknowledges that, apart from any evidence which may be collected from scripture, it is not an easy task to tell who succeeded the apostles in the government of the churches.²

In short, when we consider how much the ground on which Episcopacy should rest, as a *necessary constitution* of the church, is disputed, even among Episcopalians themselves; the extreme obscurity of the evidence in favour of what would merit to be called a *divine right* for *any* one form of church-government; and the difficulties with which this claim is encumbered, as made by Episcopacy in particular,—ought the practice of

¹ ‘Mr. Jones has undertaken to prove, that by far the greater part of the (English) bishops were of Scottish ordination, and were no more than presbyters.’ Doddridge’s Lects. 197. See, also, ‘*An Account of the Churches in Great Britain* ; in answer to Jones.’ Ibid.

² Eusebius Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. iii.

this mode, to be made essential to the unity of the church of Christ? Is this, may we not ask, either scriptural or reasonable?

With respect to the *Diocesan* form of Episcopacy, in which a number of christian societies are subjected to the general government of one individual, it is certain that the testimony of ecclesiastical history is unambiguous. Into the question of the propriety of this form, in the abstract, or of any particular modification of it, we enter not. No Christians, however, of other communions in England, so far as we are aware, are *now* found affirming that those who may conscientiously think proper to adopt Diocesan Episcopacy *for themselves*, are not justified in so doing, provided they attempt not, in any way, to impose it on others; or to represent it as necessary to unity.* Other denominations of Christians are willing to hold the most fraternal union with Episcopalians

* Not so the Brownists of the 16th century. ‘They pretended that they did not differ from the Church of England in any article of faith; yet they maintained all her ordinances and sacraments to be invalid.’ Life of Bp. Hall, by the Rev. John Jones, Perpetual Curate of Cradley, Worcestershire. 1826. p. 50.—Happy had it been for the church of Christ, if the sectarianism of the Brownists had never been imitated in subsequent times. But if they sometimes failed in candid judgment, let it not be forgotten how cruelly they were goaded by persecution, and how nobly many of them bore it, for conscience sake!

as such, on the same terms on which these denominations maintain intercourse with each other; that is, on the principle of mutually conceding the right of private judgment. Diocesan Episcopalians are entitled to this right; but if the claim to *exclusiveness* be referred to the decision of history, what is that decision? That Diocesan Episcopacy was not the platform of the early church, but was the growth of time.—This clearly appears, from the testimony of all christian antiquity. Respecting the primitive churches, and the nature of the Episcopacy which first prevailed, ample evidence may be gathered from Clement of Rome, the letters of Ignatius, from Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Eusebius, and others.

In their writings, we find the original primitive bishop spoken of as the pastor of a congregation.¹ The church over which he presided, is said to be the church, *in*, or *at* any town or city, agreeably to the usage of the New Testament.² The scene of his cure is often called a *parish*, or *neighbourhood*—a locality in which a greater or less number of houses are situated near to each other. Thus

¹ Unus in ecclesia ad tempus sacerdos. Cypr. Epist. 55. § 6. ἓνα ἐπίσκοπον δεῖν εἶναι. Cornelius apud Euseb. lib. vi. c. 43.

² ἐκκλησίᾳ τῇ οὐσῇ ἐν Σμύρνῃ. Ignat. ad Smyrn.—Ea quæ est in quoque loco ecclesia. Irenæus, lib. ii. c. 56.

we read of the ‘ parish of Ephesus,’ ‘ of Corinth,’ ‘ of Athens,’ ‘ of Carthage ;’ and the church at a given place, is said to be the church *parishing*, or dwelling together as neighbours, in that locality.¹ On the ‘ Lord’s day ’ or ‘ Sunday,’² ‘ all assembled in one place ;’³ ‘ for,’ says Ignatius, ‘ where the bishop is, there must be the people.’ ‘ You ought to do nothing without the bishop.’ ‘ Where the pastor is, there, as sheep, do ye follow him.’ ‘ If the prayer of one or two have so much force, how much more efficacious must that be, which is made by the bishop and the whole church ?’⁴ As there was commonly one place of meeting for the bishop and his people, so there was one communion. ‘ There is but one altar,’ says Ignatius, ‘ as there is but one bishop.’ The ‘ whole brotherhood ’ were present at the celebration ; and Justin Martyr says that, if any were absent, the eucharist was ‘ sent to them by the deacons.’⁵

¹ τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ παροικίας. Euseb. iii. c. 4. et *passim*. παροίκουση Κόρινθον. Clemens Rom. Epist.

παρόικοι sunt accolæ ; quare qui fanum aliquod accolunt parœci dicti sunt. Stephanus in verb.

² Die Dominico. Tertull. de Coron. Milit.—Diem Solis. Tertull. Apol. c. 16.

³ ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ. Justin Mart. Apol. 2.

⁴ Ignat. ad Trall.—ad Smyrn.—ad Philad.—ad Ephes. et alib.

⁵ Ignat. ad Philad.—Cypr. Epist. 63. § 12.—Just. Mart. Apol. 2.

The bishop, besides preaching,¹ and praying in the assembly, also baptized. He superintended the christian poor, the orphans and widows, the sick, prisoners, and strangers; and acted as the almoner of the society.² Of the extent of the charge which belonged to some of the primitive bishops, we may often form a judgment from circumstances mentioned incidentally. ‘Let your assemblies be held more frequently,’ says Ignatius to Polycarp, ‘seek out all by name.’³ It would appear that at Antioch, in the third century, there was but one place of christian worship, as Eusebius informs us that ‘Paulus Samosatenus, the heretical bishop, refused to give up the House of the Church.’⁴ When Anferus, bishop of Rome, died, about A. D. 236, ‘all the brethren met together, in the church,’ in order to choose his successor.⁵ Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, knew every one of the people of his charge;⁶ and when he was exiled, he sent messengers to pay off the debts of the brethren, and to aid any who might want assistance in their trades.⁷

Again, let those who would make Diocesan

¹ Origen in Ezekiel. Hom. 3.

² Tertull. de Baptismo.—Justin Mart. Apol. 2.

³ ἐξ ὀνόματος πάντας ζητεῖ. Ignat. ad. Polycarp.

⁴ Euseb. vii. c. 30.

⁵ Euseb. vi. c. 28.

⁶ Ut omnes optime nossem. Cypr. Epist. 58.

⁷ Idem. Ibid.

Episcopacy essential to visible unity, and who appeal to antiquity in support of their views, reflect on the earliest testimony of Ecclesiastical History, respecting the internal economy of the primitive churches. It appears that they were popular institutions, subject to no spiritual control beyond the limits of each individual congregation. It is obvious, from the apostolical epistles, that, in the churches to which they were addressed, the whole body of the faithful were concerned in maintaining the discipline, and regulating the general affairs of the society. The same was the case for centuries after the apostolic age. Clemens Romanus calls acts of discipline ‘things commanded by the multitude.’¹ Thus, in Cyprian’s time, the ‘Schism of Felicissimus,’ and the question respecting ‘*Restoring the Lapsed*,’ were judged of by the people.² Offenders were restored by *their* consent;³ and, without it, none could be received into the peace of the church.⁴

¹ τὰ προστασσόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ πλήθους. Clemens Rom. Epist. ad Cor.—See also Cyprian. Epist. 28. § 2. and Epist. 59. § 1.

² Secundum arbitrium quoque vestrum. Cypr. ad Plebem Epist. 40. § 7. Examinabuntur singula judicantibus vobis. Ad Plebem Epist. 12. § 1.

³ Acturi causam apud plebem universam. Epist. 10. § 4.

⁴ Sine petitu et conscientia plebis. Apud Cyprian Epist. 59. § 1.

The bishop was elected by the whole church.¹ Thus, for example, Cyprian says he was made bishop of Carthage ‘by the suffrage of all the people.’² The consent of the neighbouring ministers, however, appears to have been usually obtained: Alexander was chosen bishop of Jerusalem by the people; and the bishops of the neighbourhood gave their approval.³ The people were consulted in the ordination of any person of their body.⁴ Clement of Rome testifies that even the apostles ordained bishops and deacons, with the approbation of the whole church.⁵ The ordination-service was conducted by the neighbouring bishops;⁶ and we read of as many as sixteen being present at the settlement of a brother.⁷ When certain individuals who belonged to the church over which Cyprian presided, had committed an offence, he says that he himself was

¹ De universæ fraternitatis suffragio. Cypr. Epist. 68. § 6. Also Euseb. lib. vi. c. 28. Also Cypr. Epist. 67. § 2.

² About A. D. 250. Populi universi suffragio. Epist. 55. § 6. 7. and 40. § 1.

³ Euseb. lib. vi. c. 11.—Cypr. Epist. 68.—§ 6.

⁴ Fit ordinatio justa et legitima, quæ omnium suffragio et judicio fuerit examinata. Cypr. Epist. 68. § 4. Epist. 33. ad Clerum et Plebem.

⁵ συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης. Clem. Rom. Epist. ad Cor.

⁶ Cypr. Epist. 53. § 1. comp. Epist. 55. § 12.

⁷ Cypr. Epist. 52. § 16. comp. Epist. 55. § 12.

not a sufficient judge of their conduct; and that 'it must be investigated by the people.'¹ Every church, indeed, exercised discipline over its own members;² and managed its own internal affairs.³ Sometimes, they elected one of their deacons as a messenger to some other church.⁴ Public letters from one church to another were read before all the people; and were occasionally sent by them and their bishop to individuals.'

The very name '*pagans*'⁶ indicates the fact that heathenism lingered in country places, after Christianity had gained a solid footing in towns and cities. Yet it is by no means to be supposed that, in the primitive times, the Gospel was wholly confined to populous places. Clement of Rome says that the Apostles 'preached both in the country and in cities, and constituted bishops and deacons.'⁷ We learn that Paulus Samosatenus, mentioned above, had many flatterers among the bishops of the adjacent country places

¹ Hæc tractanda cum plebe universa. Cypr. Epist. 28. § 2.

² Cypr. Epist. 55. §. 16. Epist. 72. § 3. Epist. 52. § 13.

³ In commune tractabimus. Cypr. Epist. vi. § 5.

⁴ Ignat. Epist. ad Philad. See. p. 135, note.

⁵ Cypr. Epist. 55. § 21.—Clem. Rom. Epist. ad Cor. Cypr. Epist. 58. § 2.

⁶ Country people.

⁷ Clem. Rom. Epist. ad Cor.

and cities.¹ Zoticus was bishop of the village of Comane;² and it is probable that many of the eighty-seven bishops assembled at Carthage, in the year 258, were pastors of obscure village-churches; for the very names of the places are unknown to the geographers.³ In some instances, the congregation came partly from the neighbouring rural districts; and all who composed it, both of city and country, met together; and the bishop preached, and administered the eucharist.⁴

Now it cannot be doubted by any one who impartially examines these and other testimonies from the Fathers of the primitive church, that the Episcopacy which first prevailed, was congregational or parochial; and that whatever authority there may be in early precedent, *that* authority is certainly not in favour of Diocesan Episcopacy. To make it *essential*, therefore, to the constitution of the church, is to introduce an innovation into the terms of unity, unknown to the first ages, and, to say the least, as indefensible, on the ground of historical precedent, as it would be to contend for either Presbyterianism, or Independency, as indispensable to the unity of the body of Christ.

¹ ἐπισκόπους των ὁμόρων ἀγρῶν τε καὶ πόλεων. Euseb. lib. vii. c. 30.

² ἀπο Κομάνης κάμης. Euseb. lib. v. cap. 16.

³ Concil. Carthag. apud Cypr.

⁴ Justin Martyr. Apol. 2.

SECTION V.

EXTRACTS FROM SEVERAL MODERN WRITERS ON THE
CONSTITUTION OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

THE following quotations from modern writers on Ecclesiastical History, are introduced as further tending to moderate high-church claims, among *all parties*; and to lead us to place *unity* in something more spiritual than outward forms. The authors shall speak for themselves, without any comment being added, on the shades of opinion which they may exhibit. Sufficient coincidence of view, however, will be found among them, to justify the remark—that, since the primitive times, the unity of the church has mainly suffered from the introduction of human authority, where Christ alone ought to reign.

Lord Chancellor KING, in his celebrated work on the Primitive Church, amply illustrates the character and practices of the early Christian assemblies, especially from the time of Ignatius, in the second century. After stating that ‘the Holy Scriptures, and Clemens Romanus, mention many Bishops in one church,’ while ‘Ignatius, Tertulian, Cyprian,’ and other Fathers ‘affirm that there

was, and ought to be but one,' the author, speaking of the times of these latter writers, thus proceeds : ' I shall lay it down as sure, that there was but one Supreme Bishop in a Place, that was ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος, The Bishop, by way of Eminency and Propriety. . . That there was but one Church to a Bishop will appear from this single Consideration that the ancient Dioceses are never said to contain Churches in the plural, but only a Church, in the singular. So they say *the Church of the Corinthians, the Church of Smyrna.*'

' As for the word *Diocese*,* by which the Bishop's Flock is now usually express'd, I do not remember that ever I found it used in this sense by any of the ancients. But there is another word still retained by us, by which they frequently denominated the Bishop's Cure, and that is Parish : So in the Synodical Epistle of Irenæus to Pope Victor, the Bishopricks of Asia are twice called Parishes. And in Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, the word is so applied in several hundred places. It is usual to read there of the Bishops of *the Parish of Alexandria, of Ephesus, of Corinth, of Athens, of Carthage* ; by that term, denoting the very same that we now call a *Parish, viz.* a competent number of Christians dwelling near together, having one Bishop, Pastor, or Minister set over them, with whom they all met at one time to

* See also Campbell's Lectures, vol. i. p. 207.

worship and serve God. . . A Parish and a particular Church are synonymous Terms. . . A single Congregation and a Parish were all one, of the same Bulk and Magnitude. . . In many places the Faithful might be so few, as that for twenty or thirty Miles round, they might associate together under one Bishop, and make up but one Church, and that a Small one too. But this I say, that how large soever their Local Extent was, their Members made but one single Congregation. . . The very largest of the Bishopricks were no greater than our particular Congregations are.'

' Now the Four greatest Dioceses that in those Days were in the World, are *Antioch*, *Rome*, *Carthage*, and *Alexandria* ; the three former of which, during the whole three hundred years after Christ, never branched themselves into several particular Congregations, though the latter did. As for the Diocese of Alexandria, though the Numbers of the Christians therein were not so many, but that in the Middle of the Fourth Century, they could all, or at least most of them, meet together in one Place, as I might evince from the writings of Athanasius (Apol. ad Constant.), were it not beyond my prescribed Time, yet in the Third Century they had divided themselves into several distinct and separate Congregations, which were all subjected to one Bishop, as is clearly enough asserted by Dionysius, Bishop of this Church ; (Advers. Germa-

num apud Euseb. lib 7. cap. 11 ;) those Members of this Bishopric who lived in the remotest parts of it, finding it incommodious to go to their one usual Meeting-place, which was very far from their own homes. ’

BARROW, in his ‘ Discourse concerning the Unity of the Church,’ thus bears testimony to the entire absence of all coercive uniformity from the principles on which unity was promoted among the Primitive Christians; at a time when the term *church* still signified a local society of believers, collected from the world of heathen idolaters, or from the dispersed Jews; and freely united as brethren for the purpose of observing the laws of Christ, and enjoying the spiritual liberty with which he had made them free.² ‘ Each Church did separately order its own Affairs, without recourse to others, except for charitable Advice or Relief, in cases of extraordinary difficulty and urgent need. This appeareth by the Apostolical Writings of St. Paul and St. John to single Churches, wherein they are supposed able to exercise spiritual power for establishing decency, removing Disorders, correcting Offences, deciding Causes, etc. This *Ἀυτονομία* and Liberty of

¹ Enquiry; pp. 11. 12. 15. 16. 31. 38; where also, the authorities are adduced, a selection from which has been collected in pages 147—153.

² Gal v. 1.

Churches doth appear to have long continued in practice.’¹

MOSHEIM takes the following view of ‘the constitution of the Christian Church in its infancy.’ Having stated his opinion, that ‘neither Christ himself, nor his holy apostles, have commanded anything clearly or expressly concerning the external form of the church, and the precise method according to which it should be governed,’ he proceeds: ‘It was the assembly of the people, which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them by a free and authoritative consent, when recommended by others. The same people rejected or confirmed, by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed by their rulers . . . passed judgment upon the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in their community; and, in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power.’

‘Three or four presbyters ruled. . . But the number of presbyters and deacons increasing with that of the churches, these new circumstances required new regulations. It was then judged necessary that one man of distinguished gravity and wisdom should preside.’² This person was

¹ Barrow’s Works, edited by Tillotson, 1716. vol. i. p. 772.

² It is worthy of remark that the *presidency* of one indi-

at first styled the *angel* of the church; but was afterwards distinguished by the name of *bishop*, or inspector. A bishop, during the first and second century, was a person who had the care of one christian assembly. In this assembly he acted, not so much with the authority of a *master*, as with the zeal and diligence of a faithful *servant*. He charged the presbyters, indeed, with the performance of those duties and services which the multiplicity of his engagements rendered it impossible for him to fulfil; but had not the power to enact or decide anything without the consent of the presbyters and people.'

'The power and jurisdiction of the bishops soon extended themselves. New churches in the neighbouring towns and villages . . grew imperceptibly into ecclesiastical provinces, which the Greeks afterwards called *dioceses*.* But as the bishop of

vidual in a congregation, has been found to have so many advantages, that it is the usual mode, even in churches which are not Episcopalian. Thus Presbyterian and Independent congregations, however large, seldom have more than one pastor; or if they have two, these are rarely, if ever, on a perfect equality. One is the senior or leading minister. So far, therefore, as the primitive episcopacy consisted in the circumstance of there being *one head* in a congregation, it is not peculiar to one denomination—See pages 112. 113. 140.

* It is easy to perceive how the influence of one faithful, laborious minister, might extend itself over a number

the city could not extend his labours and inspection to all these churches in the country and in the villages, so he appointed certain suffragans or deputies to govern and to instruct these new societies; and they were distinguished by the title of *chorepiscopi*, i. e. country bishops.*

MILNER, in treating of the ecclesiastical history of the second century, thus states his views in reference to 'church-government in those times;' 'In vain, I think, will almost any modern church, whatever, set up a claim to exact resemblance. Usher's model of reduced Episcopacy seems

of Christian Societies. Of this, there have been many examples, in England, since the days of Whitefield and Wesley; whose apostolic labours marked an epoch in the religious history of the country, second only to the Reformation itself. Devoted men, of different denominations, have often succeeded in introducing evangelical truth into a number of villages around the locality of their immediate pastoral charge; and the consequence has been the formation of congregations in these places, where divine service has sometimes been conducted by persons from the parent church, during one part of the day; while the Christians of these villages have still retained their connexion and communion with that church. A number of distinct churches, has frequently been the ultimate result. In this way, the first Diocesan Episcopacy might clearly have had its origin.

* Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, by Maclaine.) Lond. 1806. vol. i. chap. ii. pp. 97. 99. 100. 105. 106. 107.

to come the nearest to the plan of the primitive Churches. At first, indeed, or, for some time, church-governors were only of two ranks, Presbyters and Deacons: at least this appears to have been the case in particular instances . . . As these Churches grew numerous, they could never be all assembled in one place: the Presbyters must have ministered to different congregations, though the Church continued one. Toward the end of the first century, all the churches followed the model of the mother-church at Jerusalem, where one of the Apostles was the first Bishop. A settled presidency obtained, and the name of Angel was first given to the supreme ruler. . . . The address of the charges to him in the book of the Revelation demonstrates his superiority.*

‘ It has been an error common to all parties, to treat these lesser matters, as if they were JURE DIVINO, or like the laws of the Medes and Persians, unalterable. Could it however be conveniently done, it may perhaps be true that a reduced Episcopacy, in which the Dioceses are of small extent, as those in the Primitive Church undoubtedly were, and in which the President, residing in the metropolis, exercises a superintendency over ten or twelve Presbyters of the same city and neighbourhood, would bid the fairest to promote order, peace, and harmony. But the Christian

* Rev. ii. iii,

world has been more anxious to support different modes of government, than to behave as Christians ought to do in each of them.’¹

GIESELER, in his account of the ‘First Period’ of the Church, or to the time of Hadrian,’² says: ‘The new churches formed themselves everywhere on the model of the mother-church at Jerusalem. At the head of each church were the Elders, all equal in official rank, though in several instances a peculiar authority appears, from personal considerations, to have been yielded to some one individual After the death of the Apostles, and their pupils, to whom the general direction of the churches had always been conceded, some individual presbyter of each church was suffered, gradually, to take the lead. In the same irregular way the title of bishop was assigned to this first Presbyter.’

¹ Milner’s History of the Church of Christ ; revised and corrected by Dean Milner, 1812. Century ii. chap. i. pp. 161. 162. Four Volumes of this Work were printed by the University of Cambridge, at their own expence. (See note to the Edition of 1810.) If public bodies, and Christian denominations in general, had *practically* carried out some of the catholic views of their best members, and which they have themselves, sometimes, more or less, publicly sanctioned,—how different would now have been the state of religious parties !

² 1—117. Gieselers Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte, 1824 ; Abschn. i. cap. 2. § 29. cap. 3. § 32.

‘ The influence of the bishops (to the time of Septimius Severus¹) naturally increased with the increasing frequency of Synods, at which they were the representatives of their churches. Country-churches which had grown up around any city, appear, together with their bishops, (χωρεπίσκοποι,) to have been usually, to a certain degree, under the authority of the mother-church. With this exception the churches were, all, alike independent, though some were held in especial honor on such grounds as their apostolical origin, or the importance of the city in which they were situated. Many similar circumstances combined to give a peculiar eminence to the Church of Rome, especially in the West.’₂ . . .

‘ We have now (from Septimius Severus to the sole Empire of Constantine³) to speak of a new institution . . . This was the Provincial Synod, which had been growing more frequent ever since the end of the second century . . . As these Synods were generally held in the chief city of the province, the bishop of that city presided as a matter

¹ 117—193. Ibid. Abschn. ii. cap. ii. § 52.

² Compare Bingham i. p. 192, etc. Planck i. p. 73, etc.

‘ In Africa, where suburban bishops were particularly numerous, they were in no respect distinguished from other bishops, not even in name. Cf. *St. A. Morcelli* Africa Christiana P. I. p. 43.’—Gieseler. *Ibid.*

³ 193—324 A. D. Gieseler, Bd. i. Abschn. iii. cap. 4. § 66.

of course; and thus these bishops (Metropolitans) came to exercise a kind of superintendence over the rest.'

From the opinions of NEANDER, on the subject of church-government, the following may be adduced. 'That the name bishop was (in the apostolic age) *wholly synonymous* with that of presbyter, is clearly shown from the passages of the New Testament where both appellations are interchanged; (Acts xx. 17, comp. 28. Titus i. 5. compare 7,) also from those in which the office of deacon is named immediately after that of 'episcopus;' so that between these two church-offices, a third could not intervene. (Philip. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1....8.) This interchange of the two appellations is a proof of their entire coincidence. Had the name *bishop* originally been only the distinctive name of a director of this Church Senate, a *Primus inter Pares*, such an interchange could never have occurred. . . . '*

'As the apostles, at the appointment of deacons, allowed the church itself to choose, and as this was also the case when delegates of the churches were, in their name, to accompany the apostles, (2 Cor. viii. 19.) we may conclude that in the appointment of other church-offices, a

* Neanders Allgemeine Geschichte der Christlichen Religion und Kirche. Bd. 1. Abtheil. 1. Abschn. 2. i. 1. A. S. 284. 285.

similar mode of proceeding took place. It may have happened, however, that the apostles themselves, in many cases, in which they could not sufficiently confide in the spirit of the new churches, intrusted the important office of the presbyters to such as appeared to them, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the most qualified for it: their choice would, also, in the highest degree deserve the confidence of the churches: (comp. Acts xiv. 23. Titus i. 5:) although when Paul empowers Titus to the appointment of church-directors who had the necessary qualifications, nothing is, thereby, necessarily determined as to the nature of the election; nor is election by the church itself, necessarily excluded. Clement of Rome¹ adduces the rule, as though delivered by the apostles, for the appointment of church-offices, that they should be held according to the judgment of approved men, with the consent of the whole church.² . . .

‘It was natural that, as the Presbyters formed a deliberative assembly, one among them should take the precedence. What we find in the *second* century, leads us to conclude that the standing office of president of the presbytery must have been formed soon after the apostolic age, which president, inasmuch as he pre-eminently took the

¹ Clem. Epist. c. 44.

² Neander, S. 290. 291.

oversight of everything, received the name of Ἐπισκοπος, and was thereby distinguished from the other presbyters. This name was, at length, exclusively assigned to this president, while the name of presbyter, at first, still remained common to all; for the bishops, (as the presbyters who had the precedence,) had as yet no other official character than that of presbyters, they were only *Primi inter Pares*. . . . Even *Tertullian* calls the directors of christian churches by one general name of *seniores*, while he includes under this name both bishops and presbyters; although, otherwise, the difference between bishops and presbyters¹ is strongly marked in the writings of this Father. On the whole, *Tertullian* stands, in many respects, at the point which separates between the old and the new time of the Christian church.²

The following extracts are from the views taken by the REV. GEORGE WADDINGTON, in a recent work on the same subject: ‘It is certain that as soon as the death of the last of the Apostles had deprived them (the early Churches) of the more immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, and left them, under God’s especial care and providence, to the uninspired direction of mere men, so

¹ ‘Apologet. c. 39.’

² Neander, *Ibid.* B. S. 292. 293. 294.

soon had every¹ Church respecting which we possess any distinct information, adopted the Episcopal form of government. In the next place, it is equally true, that neither our Saviour nor his Apostles have left any express or positive ordinances for the administration of the Church². . . . It is also true that in the earliest government of the first Christian Society, that of Jerusalem, not the elders only, but the whole Church, were associated with the Apostles.'

'According to the earliest form of Episcopal government, it would appear that the bishop possessed little, if any power in matters of discipline, except with the consent of the council of presbyters. . . . Of most of the apostolical churches, the first bishops were appointed by the apostles ; of those not apostolical, the first presidents were the missionaries who founded them ; but on their death, the choice of a successor devolved on the

¹ Compare note 1. page 107.

² 'Principles are given, but no specific rules. Hinds's Early Church.' A History of the Church by the Rev. George Waddington, M.A. Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge, and Prebendary of Ferring in the Cathedral Church of Chichester. 1833. p. 20. note.

Also the Christian Observer for March 1804, states that 'Episcopalians found not the merits of their cause upon any express injunction, or delineation of ecclesiastical government in the scriptures, for there is none.' Vol. iii. p. 155.

members of the society. In this election the people had an equal share with the presbyters and inferior clergy, without exception or distinction; and it is clear that their right in this matter was not barely testimonial, but judicial and elective. This appointment was final, requiring no confirmation from the civil power, or from any superior prelate, and thus in the management of its internal affairs, every church was essentially independent of every other.¹ The churches, thus constituted and regulated, formed a sort of federative body of independent religious communities, dispersed through the greater part of the empire, in continual communication, and in constant harmony with each other. It is towards the end of the second century that the first change is perhaps perceptible. . .'

'We find the first instance of general assemblies at this period . . . Some evil will be expected to arise out of much good; and evils of some importance have been attributed to the necessary frequency of Synods. The first was an early addition to the orders and gradations of the hierarchy It is certain that, at this period, we find the first complaints of the incipient corruption of the clergy.'²

¹ See also Bishop Kaye on Tertullian. 1826. ch. iv. p. 236.

² 'From the moment that the interests of the ministers became at all distinguished from the interests of the reli-

The same candid writer, speaking of the provincial Synods, and the Metropolitans, of the third century, remarks: 'It was the natural consequence of this system, acting on human imperfection, that the occasional presidents insensibly asserted a general pre-eminence over other bishops, which it became their next step to dispute with each other; and that the other bishops, being now constantly distinguished from their presbyters by these synodical meetings, assumed both over them and the people a degree of ascendancy not originally acknowledged, but which it was not difficult gradually to convert into authority.'¹

From the above statements of modern writers, of different schools and times, as well as from the testimonies of the Fathers previously adduced, we may learn that there was little, if anything, in the congregational or *earliest form* of Episcopacy, which may not be said to have been more or less practised in modern times,² among various denominations of Christians; and that ECCLESIASTICAL ANTIQUITY, so far as it can be regarded as an unimpeachable witness, and a faithful interpreter

gion, the corruption of Christianity may be considered to have begun.' Waddington's History of the Church, p. 25, note.

¹ Ibid. pp. 20. 23. 24 25. 35.

² See page 159.

of scripture precedents, confirms the position with which we set out, that NO ONE FORM OF GOVERNMENT OUGHT TO BE INSISTED ON, TO THE EXTENT OF MAKING IT ESSENTIAL TO THE VISIBLE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. It is with this object, and with reference to those exclusive claims which form so great a barrier to visible unity and fraternal union, in England, that the remarks on church-government, included in this and the previous sections, have been introduced.

He who refuses fully to recognise as brethren, those Christians who think differently, on this point, from himself, is surely incurring a very solemn responsibility, which he will do well to ponder, with much prayer to God, and careful study of his word. For how firmly assured ought we to be, that we have the revealed will of God expressly on our side, before we allow ourselves to act in a manner, apparently so little in accordance with the general tenor and genius of Christianity, as to treat *him* as an alien, who differs from us on a point of mere outward form; though, in what relates to essential doctrine, and to morals, he is an unexceptionable Christian! That there is nothing to warrant such an anomalous procedure, in the New Testament, or in any legitimate inferences that may be drawn from Ecclesiastical History, has, it is hoped, been sufficiently shown.

SECTION VI.

THE VISIBLE UNITY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST,
NOT DEPENDENT ON HUMAN AUTHORITY.

IN the absence of a divine right for the details of any particular form or ceremonial, recourse has been had to the argument for *human authority*. Many divines have maintained, with Stillingfleet, that ‘What Form of Government is determined by lawful authority in the Church of God, ought to be submitted to, so far as it contains nothing repugnant to the word of God.’ This authority the above writer regards as solely vested in the ‘Civil Magistrate;’ no other persons having ‘any power to make laws binding men to obedience.’ For ‘though it be the Magistrate’s duty to consult with the Pastors, for the settlement of the Church, he doth by vertue of his own power cause the obligation of men, by his own enacting what shall be done in the Church.’ *

Though the New Testament furnishes no ground for investing the civil ruler with a func-

* Irenicum, Part ii. chap. viii. p. 416. Part i. chap. ii. pp. 45, 46.—See also page 95 above.

tion so momentous as that of supremacy in the church, more authority has sometimes been claimed for him, in some respects, than is supposed to have attached even to the *apostles themselves*. Cranmer states that ‘All Christian Princes have committed to them immediately of God, the holle cure of all their subjects;’ and he expressly includes ‘the cure of soul;’ and adds ‘ministers be appointed and elected by the Laws and Orders of Kings and Princes.’ He further remarks that, in the apostles’ time, as there were no Christian princes, ‘when any ministers were appointed by the Apostles or other, the people of their own voluntary will with thanks did accept them; not for the supremitie, Imperie, or dominion that the Apostells had over them, to command as their Princes or Masters; but as good people ready to obey the advice of good counsellours.’*

Whatever kind of advantage, either to religion itself, or to the ends of civil government, may be supposed to have resulted, in connexion with times and circumstances, from the ecclesiastical authority of princes; the question obviously remains, how far this power is in harmony with the essential character and principles of Christianity,

* See Cranmer’s Answer to ‘Certeyne Petitions and Requests made by the Clergy of the Lower House of Convocation.’ 1547. apud Stillingfleet’s *Irenicum*, Part ii. chap. viii.

and its design to establish the spiritual dominion of Him who declared, ‘ My kingdom is not of this world ’ ? * It is no proof of the goodness of a *system*, that occasional good may be traced to its operation : for desolating wars have overthrown tyrannies ; oppression has led to freedom ; and when the iniquity of Rome was ‘ full,’ like that of the Amorites, it produced the Reformation. Providence may have sometimes rendered the supremacy of the secular power subservient to the objects of Christianity ; but it should also be remembered, that the exercise of this authority, by clashing with the rights of conscience, has proved the grand source of religious discord, among Protestants, during three centuries.

According to the views quoted above, *the visible unity of the church of Christ, must, in a considerable degree, be dependent on human authority.* The power which decrees the form and order of the church, forecloses, by this very act, the question—whether any thing be enjoined that is ‘ repugnant to the word of God ?’ Though an ample toleration may be granted ; still, the civil magistrate frames *his own* conditions of visible church-unity, and prejudices all controversy respecting the consistency of these conditions with the letter, or with the spirit and genius of Christianity.

* John xviii. 36.

Questions may, no doubt, arise in an organized society of Christians, which are admitted not to affect *conscience*; and which can be peaceably decided, only on the principle of mutual concession. On such occasions, it is as much a duty to surrender a portion of private liberty to the body spiritual, as, in other cases, to the body politic. But when any matter that may be in question, relating to religious practice, is regarded by any individual concerned, as a direct affair of conscience, to conscience alone must be the appeal. For though a power absolutely discretionary, to decree the conditions of visible unity in the Christian church be not contended for; it is evident the proviso that nothing is to be commanded which is ‘repugnant to the word of God,’ is of little avail, unless each individual who is to be bound by the decisions of the magistrate, is himself allowed to form his own judgment—whether, or not, these decisions are in harmony with the divine record. Everything short of this, amounts to an infringement of that private judgment, and conviction, which are necessary to entire moral accountability. Without this liberty, all that remains, is blind submission to an infallibility like that claimed by the Church of Rome.

In support, however, of this alleged prerogative of the civil magistrate, Stillingfleet remarks as follows: ‘The plea for liberty of conscience, as it

tends to restrain the Magistrate's power, is both irrational and impertinent ; because liberty of conscience is the liberty of men's judgements, which the Magistrate cannot deprive them of. For men may hold what opinions they will in their minds, the law takes no cognizance of them : but it is the liberty of practice, and venting and broaching those opinions, which the Magistrate's power extends to If the Magistrate declare the things to be in themselves indifferent, but only upon some prudent considerations of peace and order, he requires persons to observe them, though this brings a necessity of obedience to us, yet it takes not away our Christian liberty That liberty doth lie in the freedom of Judgement, and not in the freedom of practice.'¹

Waving all discussion respecting the meaning here attached to the expressions 'liberty of conscience,' and 'Christian liberty,' we cannot refrain from asking, whether *such a liberty* as is described, ought to satisfy a Christian—when it is considered that his religious acts must be a '*reasonable service*,'² rendered by one who is 'fully persuaded in his own mind ?'³ Surely, the liberty which an intelligent Christian requires from the State, is something more than merely the liberty of *thought*, which human power cannot take away from him ! Are

¹ Irenicum, pp. 39. 57.

² Rom. xii. 1.

³ Rom. xiv. 5.

the civil magistrate and his advisers, as Hobbes would persuade us, the arbiters of moral principle? Or will rulers undertake to answer for the actions of their subjects, before the great Judge of mankind! It should be remembered that Protestant princes have often manifested as little willingness as the Church of Rome itself, to allow men to consult their own consciences, respecting the terms to which they have been required to conform, as a condition of visible unity with 'the church'—not to say a condition of enjoying certain civil rights, of which it is not here so much to our purpose to speak.

Had the learned author of the *Irenicum*, zealous as he was against Popery, payed a visit, in his day, to Spain or Portugal, he would scarcely, we may presume, have been satisfied with forming a bare 'judgment,' respecting the impropriety of worshipping the passing *host*. He would have regarded *that*, as a strange kind of 'liberty,' surely, which did not allow him to refrain from what Protestants deem idolatry, without immediately risking the horrors of the Inquisition!—But the 'Weapon-Salve for the Churches Wounds,' though well intended, and in many respects liberal, being designed, as the writer remarks, 'to abate the fury of the *Ignis Sacer*, or *Erysipelas* of contention,'* did

* Preface to the *Irenicum*.

not reach the seat of the mischief. This celebrated work, it is true, gives up entirely the doctrine of 'divine right,' as to *forms*; but it asserts little less than a divine right on behalf of man, to legislate in the church, and to demand obedience, 'be men's judgments what they will,'* on the presumption that the Protestant magistrate would command 'nothing repugnant to the word of God.'—Such was the doctrine that became popular, on the eve of the passing of the *Act of Uniformity*, which was a practical illustration of it. Thankful ought Christians to be to the ruler of princes, that we live in a period which is nearly two centuries in advance of those unhappy times!

Other writers lay the basis of an exclusive church-form and ceremonial, in a union of the views taken by Cranmer, Stillingfleet, and others, with the doctrine of the divine right of a particular mode of government. A learned author, in a recent work of great research, states as follows: 'Episcopacy was established by the apostles, and is obligatory on the whole church. . . . I assume all the essentials of rites and discipline, transmitted from our Lord and his apostles, to be preserved If alterations not affecting essential points are proposed, bishops are invested with the right of making regulations in such points;

* *Irenicum*, 1661. p. 416. The work was first published in 1659.

for, succeeding to the place of the apostles, it is virtually said to them, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven*. . . . The ecclesiastical supremacy of the Christian magistrate consists in his general right of protection to the church, and to its essential principles. He is to preserve the peace and unity of the church, procuring the termination or suppression of controversies. He has the right of making injunctions or ecclesiastical laws, confirmatory of the catholic doctrine and discipline, with the advice of competent persons, and he may enforce his decrees by temporal penalties.* These views, if they give rather more power to 'the church' than the former, equally place the supremacy in the civil magistrate.

The statements that have been quoted are based on considerations drawn from *religion* itself. Another class of writers take lower ground, and assign ecclesiastical power to the civil ruler, on the principle of the mere *temporal welfare of nations*. One of the leading advocates of this order of things, is Bishop Warburton; who affirms that '*the true end for which religion is established, is not to provide for the true faith, but for civil*

* A Treatise on the Church of Christ. By the Rev. William Palmer, M.A., of Worcester College, Oxford. Part vi. chap. i. pp. 377. 382. 389. Part iv. chap. xv. p. 290. Part v. chap. iii. pp. 325. 326.

*utility.** That the more true piety there is in a nation, the greater will be its general security and prosperity, can scarcely be doubted ; but it is difficult to see how this matured Erastianism can be freed from the charge of directly tending to desecrate religion ; to render heaven subordinate to earth ; and the church to the world. It is true this doctrine may be popular with civil governments, but it is rejected by a very large class of individuals, who assert the right of the magistrate to ecclesiastical power.

The dominion of man in the professed church of Christ, is now of such antiquity ; it is so blended with the associations of mankind ; and so interwoven with the constitution of States ; that it may probably admit only of a slow and gradual withdrawment. Thus one form of corruption in Christianity, may be produced by another. That the supremacy of Protestant Princes, in the church, is a far less evil than the spiritual despotism of Rome, no Protestant will deny ; and the minor evil may have had existence, from a sort of necessity involved in the greater. Erroneous ideas of the unity of the church, aided the ambition of the Roman pontiff to claim universal

* Warburton's Alliance, Bk. iii. ch. 4. See also Mackintosh's History of England, vol. iii. p. 12. Compare Dick on Church Polity. 1835.

dominion; to assume to be the substitute and representative of Christ on earth; to sit on a throne of which the potentates of the world were but vassals; and to rule all Christendom as with a rod of iron. Probably this despotism, in its maturity, could have been crushed, only by collision with another. Perhaps the one grand blow that was to prostrate spiritual domination in the dust, could alone be struck by that which was temporal. One evil may thus be permitted, for a time, as the remedy against another. How far nations indicate any approach towards a religious condition which may tend to restrict civil rulers to their proper function of securing the peace of society, and its temporal welfare in general, we do not now inquire. But, while the gigantic dominion of Rome, under the image of visible unity, was the consummation of the greatest of all corruptions in the church; the standing power of the civil magistrate to enact laws for the same unity, is, as we deem, only a second and milder form of the like evil—the chronic and inveterate evil of human legislative authority in the church.

On the principle of this authority, the chief magistrate, however unchristian and immoral his character may be, is, as a matter of course, the legislative head of the church, the visible unity of which has no solid basis, but is liable to be as shifting and variable as the laws of a nation, the

humour of princes, or the secular interests of society. The magistrate may, in connexion with the legislature, frame and enforce laws which shall have the effect of keeping back, for ages, that visible moral unity, which is destined, one day, to distinguish the professing church of Christ, and to be the instrument of salvation to the world. For it cannot be too carefully borne in mind, that in the solemn moments which preceded the scenes of Gethsemane and the cross, Jesus prayed that all his disciples might be 'ONE;' and he added '*That the world may believe that thou hast sent me:*' '*That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*'¹ Now the peculiar mark, and visible sign of this *oneness*, was not placed in external forms and ceremonies, but in '*love.*' 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.'² But to pronounce what Christ has left free and undetermined, *essential* to the visible unity of the church; to prescribe, for this purpose, forms and ceremonies which he has not prescribed,—is not regarded by all Christians as presumptuous, *only* because it is so familiar. This procedure cannot fail, in a multitude of instances, to mar charity, by wounding the minds of the most upright men; even though there should be a free 'toleration' to religious opinions.

¹ John xvii. 21. 23.² John xiii. 35.

The very term *toleration*, is a mark of power existing, like the emblem of the Roman dominion at Jerusalem, 'in the holy place, where it *ought not*:' for what mortal can have a right to determine in what manner men may worship God, so long as their religious practices do not interfere with social order and morals? Unspeakable as is the blessing of religious liberty, which has grown out of the Reformation, human authority is still enthroned in the sanctuary; and will, probably, long continue to check the full and proper manifestation of the unity of the church on earth. It is true this authority has altered its character, since the once gigantic throne of the great apostasy has ceased to cast its shadow over all the realms of Christendom; but the *principle* still remains, and is consolidated with the laws of nations. The theory once was, that 'the church' was master of the world: the theory now appears to be, that the world is master of 'the church.'

Hence the christian religion has been placed in such a position, as to be easily made subservient to politics, court-influence, and ambition; human forms, ceremonies, and ecclesiastical canons, have too often been substituted for the genuine influence of the truth; and the *semblance* of unity has proved a delusive shadow of the real union of Christians, in the faith and charity of the Gospel. Instead of Christianity being left to display its

own true genius, nobly negligent of mere externals, and ever aiming at the *inner man* ; it has been compelled to fulfil its design, as it could, in the trammels of some one given form and ceremonial ; from which it has been reluctantly, if at all, allowed to deviate. Instead of as little of mere human regulation as possible in the church, human authority has obtruded itself throughout ; till religion has sometimes appeared rather as a law of man than of God : while the spiritual and unchanging principles, on which the new creation of souls is destined to emerge from the moral ruins of the fall, have been contravened, and the church has been almost confounded with the world.

As ecclesiastical laws have no power to sway the secret convictions and dispositions of men, outward uniformity is the utmost which they can effect ; and this may consequently exist, in the absence of those elements of character which are indispensable to Christian unity. This unity, on the other hand, is independent of uniformity in outward observances which Christianity has not made binding ; as clearly appears from the facts already adduced, relating to the diversities of practice which existed in the apostolic age, in regard to the Mosaic ritual. The attempt, therefore, to render outward observances essential to visible unity, is an innovation on the laws of Christ. In proportion as human institutions are identified

with Christianity, human authority is put on a level with the commands of God ; the unity of Christians is treated as dependent on the will of man ; the professed church spurns from her society some of the most conscientious servants of Christ ; the immortal axiom that ‘ THE BIBLE, and THE BIBLE ALONE, is the Religion of Protestants,’¹ is infringed ; the right of private judgment, the fundamental principle of the Reformation, is relinquished ; and the main pillar of Romanism, man’s dominion over conscience, is retained, as a prop to the Protestant church.—But we will not, here, dwell longer on the monstrous figment, that the visible unity of the church of Jesus Christ, may be made to depend on the policy or caprice of man, and his assumed right

‘ To force our consciences, that Christ set free.’²

SECTION VII.

WHEREIN THE TRUE UNITY OF THE CHURCH
CONSISTS.

THE key to real unity, must be sought in the reply which the New Testament gives to the questions

¹ Chillingworth’s Works, 1727. p. 271.

² Milton’s Poem ‘ On the New Forcers of Conscience, under the Long Parliament.’

already proposed: 'Who is a Christian?' and 'What is the Church?'¹ From this source, we learn that a Christian is a spiritual man; and that the church of Christ is a spiritual institution. Hence the unity of the church is a spiritual unity. A Christian is such, from the *state of his mind and heart*. A Christian church is a society composed of persons whose minds and hearts are spiritual.² The true unity of the church, therefore, is not formal, geographical, political, or dependent on any human laws: it is a unity which has its seat in the minds and hearts of men. Its centre is CHRIST, the head of the church. Its producing agent is the SPIRIT of God. It reigns through the medium of the TRUTH, received by faith. Its

¹ Chap. vi. p. 29.

² The author of a recent work, which has already been referred to, quotes the following statements; which will apply to the practice of a vast number of Christian churches, of various denominations: 'They are congregations of persons professing to be of a peculiar, that is, of a religious character.' 'They aim at comprehending none but persons of real piety.' These ideas of a church are strongly condemned by the author, as 'a new method of admission into the church, different from what Jesus Christ appointed.' His argument is founded on the supposed sacramental efficacy of the 'divine and holy mystery of baptism.'—See Palmer's Treatise on the Church of Christ. Part i. ch. xiii. sect. 3. When will the Protestants be emancipated from the lingering Spirit of Romanism?

conservative principle is devotion. Its bond is the common sympathy of regenerate natures—the attraction of minds, kindred in moral tastes, purposes, and interests. Its spontaneous and proper manifestation, is LOVE.

In the Christian record, the unity of the church is a frequent theme. ‘There shall be one fold, and one shepherd.’ In Christ, the Jew and the Gentile are united: ‘For he is our peace, who hath made both one.’ ‘Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one.’ ‘There is one body, and one Spirit; even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord; one faith; one baptism; one God and Father of all; who is above all, and through all, and in you all.’ ‘Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.’ The object which God is declared to have ‘purposed in himself’ by the gospel, is: ‘That he might gather together all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.’*

Nothing can exceed the *force* of the terms, in which the New Testament portrays the *intimacy* of this relation which subsists between Christ and his church, and mutually between all the members. The church is ‘the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ He is ‘the vine;’ his disciples are

* John x. 16. Eph. ii. 14. Heb. ii. 11. Eph. iv. 4. 5. 6; iii. 15; i. 10.

‘the branches ;’ and they must ‘*abide*’ in him, in order to ‘bring forth fruit.’ The church is the ‘*body* of Christ.’ He is the ‘head over all things to the church.’ ‘From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.’ ‘For as the body is ONE, and hath many members ; and all the members of that one body, being MANY, are ONE BODY ; SO ALSO IS CHRIST. For by one Spirit we are ALL baptized into ONE BODY ; whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been ALL made to DRINK INTO ONE SPIRIT. For the BODY is not ONE member, but MANY.’ ‘For we are MEMBERS OF HIS BODY, OF HIS FLESH, AND OF HIS BONES.’*

This spiritual unity, is the basis of numerous other scripture-statements, and of many practical exhortations. Among these, are the following : ‘One is your Master, even Christ ; and all ye are brethren.’ ‘Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in ONE BODY.’ ‘Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.’ ‘Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of

* Rev. xxi. 9. John. xv. Eph. iv. 12 ; i. 22 ; iv. 16. 1 Cor. xii. 12. 13. 14. Eph. v. 30.

the Son of God, unto a perfect man : That, speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.' 'Be like-minded, having the same love ; being of one accord, of one mind,' 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.' 'The world knoweth us not because it knew him not.' 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' 'Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.' 'The truth dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.' 'They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.' 'Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth.'*

That, in the first churches, *the truth* was one and the same to all believers, we learn from the harmony of doctrine which subsists throughout the various books of the New Testament, and the identity of the Christian character which they delineate. Everywhere, in the whole empire of Christianity, the same objects, like the great lights in the firmament, commanded the attention of mankind. Those stupendous events which had moved all heaven with awe and admiration, and had filled the minds of its inhabitants with a 'de-

* Col. iii. 14. 15. Eph. iv. 3. 13. 15. Philip ii. 2.
 1 Cor. vi. 17. 1 John. iii. 1. 1 John. i. 7. Jam. i. 18.
 2 John 2. John xvii. 16. 17.

sire to look into'¹ them, were the theme of devout wonder, and earnest conversation, among all who had escaped the thralldom of Jewish blindness, and Gentile idolatry; and had become members of the new creation. The apostles directed the minds of all, to the sublime fact of the coming of the Son of God in the flesh—the perfection of his human character—his sufferings and death—the reconciliation which he had effected between God and the apostate world—his resurrection and ascension—his session in glory, at the Father's right hand—the gift of the Holy Ghost, bestowed through his intercession—his universal and everlasting dominion—his second advent to judge the world.

In the practical reception of these great truths, the churches were one. The belief of these doctrines identified itself, as St. Paul describes, with obedience to 'that form of doctrine' into which believers 'were delivered' as into a mould,² to be cast and formed. The baptism of the Spirit anticipated the slow, and often inoperative deductions of reason, and gave to babes in worldly wisdom, an insight into the 'mysteries of the kingdom,' which no human learning could bestow. Both love and holiness flowed from '*obeying the truth.*'³

¹ 1 Pet. i. 12.

² εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς. Rom. vi. 17. See Doddridge and Macknight *in loc.*

³ 1 Pet. i. 22.

The genius of Christianity forbade that diversities of rite and custom should interrupt the course of charity, of which the Truth proved a perpetual source. But apart from the '*doctrine* of Christ,' love lost its vital warmth, and the sacred stream was frozen at its rise. Truth and love were inseparable. Truth was the animating principle of love; but error proved to love as the touch of a torpedo. On external points, there might be variety:—but if an 'angel from heaven' had preached '*any other gospel*,' he would have been '*accursed*.'¹

It is true that the first century had not passed away, before the Judaizing spirit, and the rising germs of Gnosticism, began to appear. Thus some pronounced the observance of the whole law of Moses necessary to salvation; while others fatally corrupted the truth, by blending the dogmas of the Oriental philosophy and Platonism, with Judaism and Christianity; maintaining opinions utterly subversive of the scripture-doctrine of the person of Christ, and his incarnation and atonement; or destructive of the morality of the gospel.² These rising heresies, it is generally

¹ Gal. i. 8. 9.

² The Gnostics were so termed, (from *γνῶσις*, knowledge,) as laying claim to superior views of truth. They appear early to have held that Christ was one of the later *Æons*, or emanations of the Deity; and thus that he had a beginning. He was sent, they affirmed, to reveal the

agreed, are frequently alluded to in the apostolical epistles,¹ and especially in the writings of St. John ; who, in the beginning of his gospel, expressly declares ‘ THE LOGOS WAS GOD.’ In his epistles, also, he lays great stress on *confessing* that ‘ Jesus Christ is come IN THE FLESH ;’ that ‘ Jesus is THE CHRIST,’ and ‘ THE SON OF GOD.’ He who rejects these truths, is said to be ‘ ANTICHRIST,’ and a ‘ LIAR.’ ‘ Who-soever abideth not in the DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, HATH NOT GOD.’ ‘ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house ; neither bid him ‘God speed : For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.’ In the Apocalypse, the ‘ DEEDS’ and ‘ DOCTRINES’ of the Nicolaitanes are awfully condemned.²

The above corruptions of the gospel were utterly fatal to Christian unity and love : and so

knowledge of the true God ; and to repair the evil which had been caused by the *Demiurgus*, or creating Æon. *Some* denied that Jesus had a real existence, and said that he was a mere phantom. *Others* maintained that he had a body, but asserted that he was born of human parents ; that Christ and Jesus were distinct beings ; and that Christ was the Spirit which descended on Jesus at his baptism.

The origin of the name *Nicolaitanes* is obscure ; but they are supposed to have been licentious Gnostics.

¹ E. g. 2 Cor. x. 5. 2 Thess. ii. 3—13. 1 Tim. i. 3. 4 ; vi. 20. Tit. iii. 9. 2 Pet. ii. iii. 16. 17.

² John i. 1. 1 John iv. 3 ; ii. 22 ; iv. 15 ; ii. 22. 2 John 9. 10. 11. Rev. ii. 6. 15.

must errors of the like portentous magnitude, ever be. In some of them, we see the earliest systematic Antinomianism. In others, it is easy to trace the first form of a class of opinions which, to this day, unfairly claim the name of Christianity; and of which a prominent feature is the doctrine, that Christ was merely a human person; that his mission was limited to the design of *instructing* mankind; and consequently that his death was *not an expiatory sacrifice*. It is obvious that these opinions, accompanied as they are with others equally at variance with the New Testament, amount to a nullification of the *scheme* of Christianity. They constitute *another religion*, which produces a totally different *state of mind*. On this system, the religion of the mass of professing Christians, is deeply corrupted with idolatry;—on *theirs*, the religion alluded to, is little else than deism, borrowing from the moral precepts of Christianity. The adherents of two systems so utterly at variance with each other, can have no true sympathy of religious feeling. Between the ‘faith once delivered to the saints,’ and opinions which exclude almost every thing which is peculiar to Christianity, there is an impassable gulf. Here, unity ceases; and union is no longer a duty. The common intercourse of mankind may still subsist: of neighbourly kindness, there should continue to be a reciprocation; and there ought to be no denial of all the rights due to peaceable citi-

zens:—but *religious* separation is to be hailed, as due to honesty; for how, in such a case, can there be the communion of ‘brethren,’ who ‘love one another’ ‘*in the truth,*’ and ‘*for the truth’s sake?*’¹

St. John says of the existing anti-christian professors: ‘*They went out from us; but they were not of us.*’² Hence, in the primitive ages, the unity of the faith remained, for the most part, entire. Irenæus, who flourished towards the close of the second century, speaking of fundamental truths, remarks: ‘The church having received this testimony and faith, diligently preserves it, as though she inhabited one and the same house, though actually dispersed over the whole world; and she believes these things exactly as though she had but one soul, and one and the same heart; and she preaches, teaches, and delivers these things, with one consent, as though she had but one mouth. For, although the languages of the world are different, still the signification of the testimony is one and the same: so that the churches that have been founded in Germany, Spain, Gaul, the East, Egypt, and Libya, or in the central parts of the world, do not differ in faith and doctrine.’³

That such a unity as is here described, cannot

¹ 2 John 1. 2.

² 1 John ii. 19.

³ Irenæus contra Hæres. Lib. i. cap. 3.

be effected by mere outward uniformity, is amply illustrated by the ecclesiastical history of Protestant Europe. Many who have been *committed* to orthodox creeds and confessions, and have thus been associated together in nominal union, have been found holding and preaching doctrines the most opposed to each other, and to those of the bulk of the Reformed churches: and the highest Supra-lapsarianism; Semi-pelagianism; Rationalism in all its shades, from its more sober, to its wilder forms; a Romanizing Protestantism;¹ and other incongruous elements; have existed, in various connexion, with the 'evangelical' faith, under the name of 'the church.' On the contrary, it is evident from well-known facts, that vast bodies of Christians may exhibit a remarkable coincidence of sentiment within themselves, on *all* the points of faith and practice which are *mutually* held to be essential; though this unity be not provided for by any laws of uniformity. Moreover, Christians of different denominations, often manifest more real visible unity and union with each other, than is found prevailing in churches constituted by the civil magistrate.² Such is the difference between the

¹ See a passage headed 'Evils of omitting the rite of Exorcism,' in the 'Tracts for the Times,' for 1834—5. Notes on Tracts 67. 68.

² See page 100, above.

unity of uniformity, and the unity of the heart.

The latter was the unity of the primitive church, before superstition and ambition had changed its character. Hence a strong reciprocal affection*—an identity of feeling, of interest, and of aim—common joys, sorrows, dangers, hopes, and fears—and, amidst all diversities of natural disposition, or acquired habit, a likeness in the elements of character, such as no mere human agency could effect. It was not necessary to know each other personally;—to know of each others *existence* was enough. Christian love could waft its benevolent desires, from the churches of Asia to the church of Corinth; and could transmit its sympathies from Macedonia to Judea. Those who had never seen each others faces, all met in spirit at the throne of that grace which had made them one; and mutual intercessions ascended to heaven, from those who would never know one another on earth. They who loved an unseen Saviour, not only loved his image when it stood before their eyes; but even when it was ideal: and the prayer that reached heaven, rose from hearts large enough to embrace the whole brotherhood of Christ, from Mount

* Tertullian speaks of Christians as ‘ready to die for each other.’ Pro alterutro mori sunt parati. Apolog. cap. 39.

Imaus to the Atlantic, and from the Rhine to the Nile.

Unjust and cruel as were the persecutions endured by the primitive Christians, they tended, no doubt, to preserve the simplicity of the gospel, and the purity of the church. Those who felt that their property, liberties, and lives, were insecure, because they were *Christians*, would be less tempted to make their own external peculiarities a condition of unity. The furnace of persecution, as often as it was kindled, would not only separate, in every church, the dross of mere profession from the pure gold of faith ; but would, at the same time, tend greatly to reveal the *sameness* of all that was genuine, and to cause it to run, as it were, into one mass. Particular forms, modes, and customs, which might vary with time and place, would be likely to be little thought of, in comparison with the unchanging truths on which the unity of the whole church is built : what was merely of human origin, would be lost in the overwhelming magnitude and importance of what was divine ; and, in the hour of impending trial, the spirits of the faithful would cleave, tenaciously, to what was *essential* in Christianity ; and would find their sympathies for each other all centring there.

PART II.

S C H I S M.

S C H I S M.

CHAPTER I.

NATURE OF SCHISM.

SECTION I.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

THE Father of modern Science has remarked, that the human mind is apt to propose to itself theories of nature, involving a uniformity which does not exist; and to imagine parallels, correspondencies, and relations, which are not actually to be found. This tendency to substitute the creations of fancy for painful and honest inquiry, Bacon regards as one of those cherished '*idols*' of the mind, which have kept men from arriving at truth.* Whatever be the analysis of this intellectual propensity, illustrations of it abound in the history of human

* Novum Organon.

knowledge, both in ancient and modern times. Hence the notion, among the earliest philosophers, that fire must be added to air, earth, and water, to make up the *even number* of the four elements, or first principles of all things :—also, the theory which prevailed till the time of Kepler, that the planets must of necessity all move in perfect circles. Even Kepler himself imagined that these bodies were *six* in number, from a mystical relation between the intervals of their spheres, and the dimensions of the five regular geometric solids ; and he declared he would not part with this discovery, for the ‘electorate of Saxony.’* He was ingenuous enough to acknowledge, that when Galileo’s telescope brought to view the satellites of Jupiter, his first feeling was—concern for his favourite theory ; which, with all its harmonies, now vanished before his own eyes. This concern was not unnatural : nor was it inconsistent with a predominant love of truth ; though it proved that genius could not compensate for the want of that unpretending and practical philosophy, the laws of which, Bacon was the first to digest into a system, so as to render them triumphant in all future time.

It were well, had philosophers, *alone*, been

* Kepleri Prodomus Dissertationum Cosmographicarum. Tübingen, 1596.

misled by dreams of the exclusive perfection of some favourite idea, while all beside was felt to clash with the proper order of the universe. It were happy, had some whose theme is greater than philosophy, been always ready to yield to the force of evidence. But a tenacious and incurable impression of the supposed necessity of a uniformity, which, fact and experience teach us, the All-Wise has not judged essential to his plans,—has often marred the unity of the church, obstructed the progress of religion, and disturbed the peace of the world.

Bacon further notices how much men are wont to be misled by mere *words*. When we would define things, not by vulgar notions, but by accurate discrimination, '*words*,' says this acute observer, '*cry out and forbid*.' The truth of this remark, all must admit. There is apt to be found in words, what Plato, somewhere, complains of in matter, 'a something stubborn and refractory,'* which tends to resist our apprehending them in their true meaning. They are, often, the almost inseparable signs of erroneous associations, which have grown with our growth, and strengthened with our strength. Illustrations might be drawn from many of the terms peculiar to theology; and from none more appropriately than from the term SCHISM.

* ἄτακτόν τι καὶ ἀνθιστάμενον.

This word, as generally employed, has lost, to a great extent, its real scriptural meaning; and has been chiefly distinguished as a term of reciprocal crimination, bandied to and fro between almost all religious parties. This ‘Greek apparition’ has been supposed to haunt every one’s house but our own. Do the sanctuary where others worship, and the forms they adopt, correspond in all points with *ours*?—*there* is beauty;—*there* is something which approaches to perfection;—*there* is the familiar symbol of unity:—all else is Schism!

The Romanist saw schism in its last stage of heretical apostasy, in whatever militated against the infallibility of St. Peter’s chair, and the visible unity of the church under one supreme head. But though Romanism be *internally*, as it ever was,—its external relations are much changed; and he who, once, seldom ‘spake,’ but ‘as a dragon,’ and in loud anathemas, now often appears ‘like a lamb.’* The charge which Rome either spares, as being without effect, or feebly utters, Protestants, it is to be lamented, have taken up against Protestants; as though they were anxious, now that the thunders of the Vatican seem almost spent, to imitate, as far as possible, their ancient terrors, by filling the church with the storms of mutual strife!

* Rev. xii. 11.

To the orthodox * Protestant, schism may be every form, even of orthodox Protestantism, that is not his own. The *Episcopalian*, especially if *his* be the national religion, may readily discover schism in the 'conventicle,' in parity of ministers, and in ordination not episcopal. The sturdy *Presbyterian* of the Commonwealth, saw schism in everything but the 'Solemn League and Covenant,' and the form and order of the Kirk. The rigid *Independent* of the same period, though more tolerant as to religious liberty, than others, might be too much disposed to regard as schism, that very communion of Christians of different churches, which is both an expression and a source of catholic charity. He might be apt to fancy he saw 'Ichabod' inscribed on the door of every sanctuary, the terms of admission into which, were not precisely like his own. Or, while he pronounced Episcopacy 'a Schism from all the Reformation,' and 'New Presbyter but Old Priest writ large,' he might forget that schism had any place in the list of *his* temptations. The strict *Baptist* treats infant-baptism as a schism, if not a heresy, by excluding from his communion all who have not been baptized by immersion, on a profession of faith; whereas the question respect-

* The term *orthodox*, is here used merely to distinguish those who hold the leading doctrines of the Reformation.

ing baptism, as it is one of the most disputed in theology, and relates not to what is doctrinal, but only ritual, would surely seem to demand special forbearance on both sides. Even the inoffensive and philanthropic *Friend*, may be sometimes found, unless he is misrepresented, detecting something like schism, in his own circle, in the form of occasional attendance at public worship with Christians who do not hold silent meetings.

On the other hand, the *Sceptic* of the day will see schism, in its *religious* sense, nowhere. In his vocabulary, it may be marked as a barbarous term, which ought to be expunged from the language. Miscalling by the sacred name of charity, the latitudinarianism which makes no distinction between religious truth and error, he regards inquiries on this subject, as uncertain and useless speculations ; especially as they have no affinity with the physical and the *material*, which appears to be the reigning taste of the age. Mistaking that freedom of *opinions*, which is the glory of civil liberty, for a licence to religious indifference ; and identifying independence of human authority in religion, with exemption from responsibility to God for our belief ; he views all those questions between Christians, which involve an estimate of the peculiarities of Christianity, as little else than the contests of self-interest, bigotry,

or fanaticism. The sceptical spirit of the age may not, it is true, so often as formerly, embody itself in direct attacks on the truth:—it may have become somewhat retiring, and wary; but it is still frequently to be discerned in the disguise of candour and liberality; and its traces may sometimes be found in the literature of our times, distinctly marking a distaste for everything that is earnest and decided in evangelical religion.—The more need have Christians, therefore, in conscientiously maintaining, among themselves, the right of private judgment, to ‘give none offence.’*

The inquiry respecting the nature and relations of Schism, however, will not be lightly regarded by any who have learned to reverence the authority of Scripture: for, here, we find it treated as an evil of great magnitude in the church. Let us, then, attach to the subject the importance which belongs to it; let it have from us the serious and candid attention which it demands; and let our views of it be sought immediately from that testimony, which is ‘truth without any mixture of error.’ We shall then, if our deductions be correct, be in a condition to judge how far the sense in which the term Schism may have been used in ecclesiastical history, and especially in modern times, accords with its usage in the New Testa-

* ἀπρόσκοποι γίνεσθε, κ. τ. λ. 1 Cor. x. 32.

ment; and how we may best endeavour to expel the evil from our own hearts.

SECTION II.

SCRIPTURE-USE OF THE TERM SCHISM.

I. The Greek noun,¹ which is the origin of the English word SCHISM, signifies, primarily, a *rent*, *division*, or *separation*; being derived from a verb² which means to *rend*, or *cleave asunder*. The *verb* is used, *literally*, *eight* times; relating, three times, to the ‘veil of the temple,’ which ‘*was rent*,’³ and, once, to the ‘rocks’ which ‘*were rent*,’⁴ while Jesus was on the cross: once, in reference to ‘new cloth,’ which ‘*makes a rent*’ in an ‘old garment:’⁵ once to the ‘vesture’ of Jesus, when the soldiers said, ‘Let us not *rend it*:’⁶ once, to the ‘heavens,’ which ‘*were opened*’ or separated, when the Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism;⁷ and once, to Peter’s ‘net,’ which was ‘*not broken*,’ by the weight of the fishes that were caught in it.⁸—The

¹ ὀχύσμα.

² σχίζω.

³ Matt. xxvii. 51. Mark xv. 38. Luke xxiii. 45.

⁴ Matt. xxvii. 51. ⁵ Luke v. 36. ⁶ John xix. 24.

⁷ Mark i. 10. ⁸ John xxi. 11.

noun occurs, in its *literal* sense, twice, and is applied, both times, to a ‘*rent*’ made in a ‘garment.’¹

The *verb* occurs, also, *twice*, in a *figurative* or moral sense: once, in reference to what took place at Iconium, when the apostles were preaching the gospel in that city: ‘The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren;’ and ‘the multitude of the city *was divided*;² and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.’—The other instance is found in the account of St. Paul’s first appearance before the council at Jerusalem. The apostle declared himself to be a Pharisee, and that he advocated the doctrine of the ‘resurrection of the dead,’ one of the leading tenets which distinguished the Pharisees from the infidel Sadducees: ‘And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the multitude *was divided*.’³

The *noun*⁴ is used, in a *figurative* or secondary sense, *six times*; importing a *division in mind and sentiment*, a want of moral harmony or unity of feeling. Three of the instances occur in St. John’s gospel, and relate to differences, which arose

¹ Matt. ix. 16. Mark ii. 21. ² ἐσχίσθη. Acts xiv. 4.

³ ἐσχίσθη. Acts xxiii. 7.

⁴ σχίσμα.

among the Jews respecting Christ : ‘ So there was a *division*.’¹

The remaining three passages in which the noun is found in the same acceptation, occur in the first epistle to the Corinthians : ‘ Now I beseech you . . . that there be no *divisions*² among you.’ ‘ I hear that there be *divisions* among you.’³ ‘ God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked : that there should be no *schism* in the body.’⁴

This last passage is the only one in which the English version has preserved the term ‘ *schism* ’ from the original. In every other case in which the Greek word is used in its figurative or moral signification, it is translated, as appears above, by the English word ‘ *division*.’ In like manner, the *verb*, also, in the two cases of its corresponding use, is rendered ‘ *divided*.’—Thus the English word ‘ *schism* ’ occurs once, only, in our vernacular translation.

II. It is evident that, though the ‘ *divisions* ’ which took place among the JEWS respecting Christ,

¹ σχίσμα, ‘ among the people because of him.’ John vii. 43. ‘ Among them.’ John xi. 16. ‘ Again among the Jews, for these sayings.’ John x. 19.

² σχίσματα, 1 Cor. i. 10. ³ σχίσματα. 1 Cor. xi. 18.

⁴ σχίσμα. 1 Cor. xii. 25.

arose from *diversities of opinion*, they included something more. The violent prejudices of some, were opposed to the convictions which had been produced in the minds of others ; and a question so interesting to Jews, as ‘ Whether the Messiah were come or not, in the person of Jesus ? ’ could not be treated as a matter of mere speculation. Some said, ‘ This is the Christ : ’ ¹ others said, ‘ Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ; ’ ² and they ‘ took up stones to stone him. ’ ³ The man who had been restored from blindness, contended that ‘ If this man were not of God, he could do nothing ; ’ while the Jews ‘ reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. ’ ⁴ Hence the division (*schism*) on this and other occasions, involved an *alienation of feeling*, which went so far, as to produce, on one side, extreme violence : and on *this* side, evidently, lay the fault. If, however, parties opposed on religious grounds, had always been related to each other, as ‘ believers,’ and ‘ unbelievers ; ’ *schism*, it is obvious, would never have been a *church-term*.

The case of the CORINTHIANS was different ; though, here also, the general meaning of the term *schism* is the same. In the city of Corinth,

¹ John vii. 41—49.

² John viii. 48.

³ John x. 31.

⁴ John xi. 28. 33.

great numbers of Christians were united together in the profession of the gospel. Their proper union, like that of all other believers, consisted in their mutual love, for Christ's sake, in the faith and practice of Christianity. Disputes, however, had unhappily arisen, in consequence of the undue and invidious partialities which many had allowed themselves to entertain for some of the ministers who had laboured among them; or by whom they had been converted, or baptized. This glorying in man, easily led to a spirit of partisanship, marked by wrath and strife; so that charity was grievously wounded, and the church was torn by contending factions. The apostle Paul, therefore, who had introduced the gospel at Corinth, a few years before, thus writes to the Corinthian Christians, with a view to expose the folly and sinfulness of their conduct, in cherishing private and party feeling, at the expense of charity; and in thus acting unworthily of their unity in Christ: 'Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions (schisms) among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions* among you.

* ἐριδες.

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?'¹

¹ 1 Cor. i. 10—13. Many commentators have supposed that what is said in the 12th verse, is to be understood by a fiction of terms and persons, under which the real individuals, by whose names the sects called themselves, were alluded to. Others, among whom may be mentioned Grotius, Whitby, Doddridge, and Bloomfield, support the literal sense; which appears the most probable. St. Paul is, here, it should be remembered, blaming, *not the teachers*, but the *Corinthians*. Theophylact says that the apostle's charge against them, was not that they said 'I am of Christ; but that *all* did not say this.' Οὐ τοῦτο ἐγκαλεῖ, διότι λέγουσιν, ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ· ἀλλὰ διότι οὐ πάντες τοῦτο λέγουσι. Grotius has illustrated the 12th verse, by a passage from Clemens Romanus, which clearly adopts the literal sense.—See Bloomfield's *Recensio Synoptica*, *in loc.*

The remark of the apostle, 'These things, brethren, I have *in a figure* transferred to myself and to Apollos, for your sakes,' (chap. iv. 6,) probably refers to what he had just been saying, respecting 'ministers of Christ.'—'The learned and judicious Witsius well observes, (Meletem. p. 104,) that it is probable the figure was only this, that the names of St. Paul and Apollos were used to signify themselves, and any others so extolled; and when the apostle would say, how little ministers were in themselves, he chose, out of humility and prudence, rather to take such freedom with himself and his most particular and intimate friend, than with others.' Doddridge.—'I have

In a subsequent part of the epistle, the apostle again adverts to the same painful subject: ‘Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions,¹ are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not yet carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?’²

Nor was this the whole of the charge against the Corinthian church, or even the weightiest part of it. In another passage, the apostle sharply rebukes the Corinthians, for the disorders which had occurred at their religious meetings; and even in that solemn commemorative rite, which, more than any other, would seem to demand a union of devotion, and charity, and every pure, and holy, and tender christian feeling.

The Lord’s Supper was originally ingrafted on the Jewish Passover; and, accordingly, in the first churches, it included an actual meal.³ The members of the society appear to have been expected to bring with them what was requisite for

brought forward this in my own person, and that of Apollos, as if what was said of *others* whom I, out of delicacy, forbear to mention, were applicable to us. Bloomfield.

¹ διχοστασίαι, separate parties (in the church). 1 Cor. iii. 3. Dissensiones, dissidia. Wahl.

² 1 Cor. iii. 3. 4. 5. ³ Hence the term das ‘Abendmahl.’

a frugal and sober repast, including the bread and wine required for the representation of the body and blood of the Lord. The whole solemnity * was sometimes called the '*agape*,' or feast of *love* ; as being both the symbol of the invisible communion of believers with the Lord himself, and the pledge of their brotherly fellowship with each other.

At the celebration of this divinely-appointed rite, the Corinthians had fallen into shameful irregularities. The design of the ordinance, as a memorial of the Saviour's death, in the communion of Saints, had been lost sight of ; and the spirit of factious preference prevailed even at the table of the Lord. The sacred feast was turned into a convivial meeting, probably of separate companies ; each of these bringing provisions only for themselves, and making a selfish meal, regardless of a decent sufficiency being provided for all in common. Some began this unseemly repast before others, with indecent haste ; and the poor members of the church were neglected ; for it appears that the rich brought of their abundance, merely for the private indulgence of their own appetites ; and some ate and drank to excess. Thus did they imitate their heathen fellow-citizens ; who were remarkable for their luxury and prodigality.

* See Neanders Kirchengeschichte. Bd. i. Abtheil. iii. 2.

‘ Now in this that I declare,’ says St. Paul, ‘ I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions (schisms) among you ; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies* (parties) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating, every one taketh before other his own supper : and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What ! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in ? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not ? What shall I say to you ? Shall I praise you in this ? I praise you not Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home ; that ye come not together unto condemnation.’

* *ἁιρέσεις*. 1 Cor. xi. 19. This verse (‘ For there must be also *heresies* among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you,’) is evidently parenthetical. The term *ἁιρέσεις*, here rendered ‘ heresy,’ does not *in itself* imply error in doctrine ; and may always be translated in the New Testament, *sect* or *party*, as in Acts v. 17. xv. 5. xxiv. 5. xxviii. 22. Heresy is a schism or division of sentiment, which has issued in the formation of parties, sects, or, it may be, factions. A ‘ heretic ’ (*ἁιρετικός*) is a factious man in the church, a man disposed to form a party. But a ‘ heresy,’ in the sense

The conduct thus described, was not only a gross violation of decency and order; but also of *brotherly love*. The poor were no longer placed on an equality, in the communion of the church, with the rich: some, it would seem, went away without partaking of the repast at all; and the church exhibited a scene of confusion. Instead of the Christian virtues, there was nothing but alienation of feeling, strife, and a variety of evil passions; inflicting a dreadful wound on that charity which cannot live in an atmosphere of selfishness and mutual disregard; and which is kept alive, only by reciprocal good-will; and by the interchange of kind offices, as occasion may arise. With a view, therefore, to place, further, before the minds of the Corinthians, the means of remedying these lamentable disorders, the apostle proceeds to lay down the doctrine of the unity of the church of Christ, in connexion with its visible manifestation, which is charity: and in this pas-

of sect, party, or faction, *may* be characterized by antichristian error in doctrine, so as to be a heresy in the *modern* sense of the term. Thus St. Peter, alluding probably to some of the Gnostic speculations, speaks of those who by ‘denying the Lord that bought them,’ should, hereafter, introduce ‘damnable (destructive) heresies;’ that is, *sects* holding destructive opinions. 2 Pet. ii. 1. See Campbell on the Gospels, Dissertation ix.

sage alone, as has already been remarked, the original word (*schisma*) is preserved in our English version :

‘ The body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body ; is it therefore not of the body ? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body ? is it therefore not of the body ? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing ? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling ? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body ? But now are they many members, yet but ONE BODY. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee : nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. For God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked ; that there should be NO SCHISM IN THE BODY ; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. NOW YE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, and members in particular.’ *

* 1 Cor. xi. 14—27.

The apostle, here, it is obvious, illustrates the unity and union of the church, by an analogy drawn from the human frame. All the members of the body, every one in its own place and order, harmoniously combine to promote the welfare of the whole system. No one member is independent of another. Each is at once the source, and the recipient of benefits. There is a mutual sympathy between them all. All derive advantages so great, from the honour and well-being of each, that they are said to '*rejoice*' in it. If one member suffer, all '*suffer*' with it. If any part be in danger of being deemed inferior, more honour is secured to it:—and this, that there may be no '*SCHISM* in the body'—no want of sympathy, or of harmony—no alienation of aim and purpose, between the members; but that each may care for all the rest, and all for each in particular.

The allegory is then applied to the church, the spiritual body of Christ. Christians are formed into one body, of which He is the head; and what the apostle states with respect to the human frame, strictly illustrates the relation which Christians sustain to each other. Such is the unity of all Christ's real disciples. Such ought to be their visible union, and mutual sympathy. Such is the identity of interest pervading the whole society of true believers. Such is to be the care exercised for each others welfare: such their mutual joy,

and mutual suffering. As the whole body is animated by one soul, and is actuated by one heart, one circulation, and one breath ;—so ought Christians to be ONE in spirit. As the eye, or the hand, or the foot, is a constituent part of the body, and injury happening to either of these parts, is injury done to the whole ; or, as the welfare of these, contributes to the welfare of the whole ;—so must Christians regard their own case, as members of ONE spiritual body ; and so ought they to feel one towards another. In short, how strikingly does the apostle's description of the unity and the union of the church, in Christ, harmonize with the language of the Saviour himself: ‘ I was an hungred—I was thirsty—I was a stranger, naked, sick, in prison.—Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye have done it unto *me*.’ *

From the whole, we learn that SCHISM is directly opposed to mutual christian sympathy and love:—to visible unity and union. Its germ is found in estrangement and alienation of heart among Christians, from whatever cause this may arise ; and it is manifested by disregard to each others feelings and welfare, for the sake of some selfish end, which is inconsistent with charity, and with the peace and harmony of the church.

* Matt. xxv. 35. 40.

This alienation of mind, when it has reached a certain stage, tends directly to impair the visible unity of a christian society, by the exhibition of an uncharitable spirit, through all its degrees, from exclusiveness and reserve, to the altercation and strife of party and faction. A dividing spirit in the church, (where charity should reign,) is the spirit of SCHISM.

III. As the original term from which the word ‘schism’ is taken, is used in reference to an evil existing among Christians *as such*, only in the three passages which have been adduced ;* it is from these passages, chiefly, that we must derive our ideas of what schism in the church, really is.

In the last of these passages, only, or that which contains the allegory respecting the human body, is the term ‘schism’ found, in an abstract sense. Schism is, there, spoken of as a conceivable derangement of the harmony subsisting between the various parts of the human frame; and the lesson implied is,—that, without care, and watchfulness, an analogous disorder may take place in a society of Christians.

In the other two examples, the schisms (or *divisions*, as rendered in the English version,) are alluded to as actual facts ; and the meaning of the

* 1 Cor. i. 10 ; xi. 18 ; xii. 25. See above.

word is explained, in the context, in one place by ‘contentions,’ and in the other by ‘parties’ or ‘factions.’* Grievously sinful, therefore, as were these schisms in the Corinthian church, it is worthy of observation that *schism*, in the abstract, is not, as we might suppose from more modern usage, ever spoken of in the New Testament as a *distinct ecclesiastical offence*, different from *variance*, *strife*, *contention*, or the like.

These ‘schisms,’ or divisions, whether relating to the contentions respecting the ministers of the gospel, or to those connected with the unbrotherly, and disgraceful scenes, which occurred at the Lord’s Supper, were evils limited to *one and the same society*. It does not appear that these unhappy strifes and irregularities had a direct bearing on any other community of Christians: they were confined to the church at Corinth. They were an *internal mischief*. Those who were previously held together in moral and spiritual union, were thrown into confusion, by the sundering of the bond of christian love. There was, if we may so say, a dissolution of the previous continuity of the society, agreeably to the use of the term ‘schism,’ as applied to *a rent in a garment*.

But though these schisms consisted of intestine disorder among the Corinthian Christians,

* See pages 210. 214. notes.

they are not condemned under the specific charge of *resistance to any subordinate church-authority*; but as a breach of the ‘new commandment’ given by Christ, ‘THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER;’¹ as a departure from the principle of doing ‘all things decently, and in order;’² as involving an irreverent, profane, and unworthy manner of celebrating the Supper of the Lord;³ and as an exhibition of invidious contention, on the question, who possessed the most shining talents?—to the disparagement of many, and to the total prevention of the edification of all.⁴ That all this could not take place without a neglect of mutual claims, as due to office, or to spiritual endowments, or even to the most ordinary Christians, is certain: but it is equally evident that these lamentable evils are treated of, as opposed to christian love, devotion, and moderation, in general, rather than as examples of direct insubordination to any authority actually existing in the church of Corinth.⁵ Even the apostle himself, in his endea-

¹ John xiii. 34.² 1 Cor. xiv. 40.³ 1 Cor. xi. 27—32.⁴ 1 Cor. xii.

⁵ Leslie speaks of the schisms of the Corinthians, as arising from ‘those who had supernatural gifts refusing to submit themselves to those who were their superiors in the church; thus they set up for themselves, and drew parties after them.’ Rev. C. Leslie’s Works; Lond. 1721. See Discourse on Qualification to administer Baptism, and

vours to heal these divisions, is very sparing in his allusions to his own *personal* authority.* He prefers, *faithful* as he is, mildly to rebuke the Corinthians, and to give his reasons for so doing, on the general principles of Christianity; and on the ground of the express revelations of Christ himself. How different, under such circumstances, would have been the tone of an epistle like those ascribed to Ignatius, even so early as the second century! What an opportunity for putting down

the Lord's Supper.—In reply to this view of the subject, it may be remarked, that the apostle blames the *Corinthians*, not the *teachers*. See Rosenmüller; and Bloomfield's Recensio, on 1 Cor. i. 12.

* Dr. Nott concludes, from St. Paul's description of these dissensions, as follows: 'Schism, therefore, may be defined an open violation of church-unity, when individuals assume to themselves the power either of forming new communions, or of instituting new rites, or of creating a new ministry, in opposition to such as have been established by regular authority, as being the ministry and the ordinances originally of apostolic institution.' (Apud Bloomfield, 1 Cor. i. 10.)—That schism is 'an open violation of church-unity,' all will admit: but the schisms of the Corinthians could scarcely be said to consist in 'forming new communions;' for the disorders at the Lord's Supper, occurred when they '*came together in the church.*' Nor did they consist in 'instituting new rites:' for the apostle makes no charge of the kind; but that the Corinthians were guilty of a riotous, uncharitable, and profane abuse of an existing rite. Nor does it appear that the schisms are satisfactorily accounted for, by supposing them to have con-

schism by high-church authority, and for bringing prominently forward the doctrine of passive obedience to church-officers ! Alas ! how many who have claimed to be ‘ successors to the apostles,’ have acted as though they were their superiors ! How many uninspired men have assumed more power in the church than St. Paul !

Again, it is worthy of remark, that, notwithstanding these antichristian strifes and factions, we have not the slightest intimation that there was any formal *separation* of a part of the society from the rest, or any discontinuance of external association in public ordinances. These schisms *may*, no doubt, in a variety of ways, have

sisted in the creation of a ‘ new ministry,’ in opposition to that which was ‘ established by regular authority ;’ for whatever false teachers there might have been in the church, it is the dissension and confusion which existed among those who called themselves by the names of lawful teachers, that is condemned.—If we could only once divest ourselves of the notion that the authority of the ministers of Christ, in the church, is of the *same nature* as the authority of civil rulers in the world, a step would be gained towards acquiring scriptural views of ‘ schism,’ (See Matt. xx. 25. 26.) The figment of a legislative, coercive power, in things spiritual, as in things temporal ; and the figment of uniformity, as essential to unity ; may prove an effectual barrier, even in the acutest minds, to a just apprehension of the true constitution, as well as of the disorders, of the Christian Church.

led, ultimately, to separations ; but, as reproved by St. Paul, they were factious dissensions, actually existing *in* a christian society. It is likely that the mischief was, in part, owing to a previous relaxation of the discipline of the church. Hence, the apostle directs the Corinthians to ‘ put away’ the incestuous person, and ‘ not to keep company’ with certain other classes of individuals, who are described as persons of unchristian and inconsistent lives ; among whom the ‘ *railer*’ is mentioned.¹ Where *voluntary* separatists are condemned, in the apostolical epistles, they are described as persons without piety ; either denying the great principles of the gospel, or not submitting to its self-denying precepts, in their lives. Such were those of whom St. John speaks, in a passage already quoted : ‘ They went out from us, but they were not of us :’² also those who are described in the epistle of St. Jude : ‘ These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.’³ Such individuals, it is evident, were either false professors, or apostates, rather than mere schismatics ; for in the very act of separation, their characters were marked as those of worldly, ungodly men, who had crept

¹ 1 Cor. v. 11. 13. See also Rom. xvi. 17. 18. 2 Thess. iii. 14. 15. 1 Tim. i. 20. 1 Tim. vi. 5. 2 Tim. iii. 5.

² 1 John ii. 19.

³ Jude 19.

into the church, but had never felt any real sympathy and union with it.

Further: it does not appear that these disorders in the church of Corinth, were connected with any difference as to the *doctrines* of Christianity. So important a circumstance in the history of these dissensions, could not have failed to be noticed, had it existed: but of any such source of disunion, as this might have proved, we have no account. The apostle, indeed, beseeches the Corinthians that, in order that there may be ‘no divisions’ (schisms) among them, they ‘all speak the same thing,’ and ‘be perfectly joined together* in the same mind, and in the same judgment.’ But had there been, here, an allusion to serious errors in doctrine, these errors would have been more distinctly marked; and the church would not have been exhorted to unanimity with those who denied the faith of Christ; but rather to separation from them. Nor can we suppose that there is here implied, the necessity of a perfect coincidence of opinion, on all minor points, in order to the avoidance of schisms: for we have seen that differences, in several respects,

* *κατηρτισμένοι*, restored as a torn garment, or repaired as a broken vessel: metaphorically, re-united in concord, which had been interrupted. See Bloomfield’s *Recensio Synopt. in loc.*

such as meats, days, and the like, were allowed by apostolical authority ; and believers were, on these points, to *agree to differ*.¹ Some diversities of sentiment, in things not fundamental, may be expected even among the best Christians, and the most firmly united in all that is *essential* : so various are the capacities, biases, and associations of men's minds. To ' speak the same thing,' and to ' be perfectly joined together in the *same mind*, and in the *same judgment*,' is to be animated with one spirit in the pursuit of peace and union ; to be one as to everything that is vital, in christian doctrine and practice ; to *dispute* about nothing ; to be unanimous in aim and design, as Christians ; and even where opinions differ, practically to agree, by mutual concession.² In like manner, when it is enjoined on the Philippians to be '*like-minded*, having the same love, being of one accord, *of one mind* ;'³ the meaning evidently is, that they were to coincide, in sympathy and disposition, towards the main, leading objects, which ought to interest the followers of Christ, rather than that they were expected absolutely to concur in the same shade of opinion, on every circumstantial point.

From the entire testimony of Scripture respect-

¹ Part. I. ch. viii. sect. ii.

² Idem velle, et idem nolle.

³ ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε . . . τὸ ἐν φρονοῦντες. Philipp. ii. 2.

ing this subject, we may conclude that the SCHISMS condemned, were such *differences of opinion and of feeling*, among the members of one particular church, on matters connected with their common interest as professed Christians, as produced heart-burnings—alienation—contention—party spirit—and other uncharitable tempers, and unseemly conduct. The immediate *occasion* appears to have been, an overweening attachment to creatures, the *instruments* of the Head of the church, in the work of salvation. The evil did not lie in simply preferring the ministry of *one* of these servants of Christ, to that of another; but in the factious adoption of party-names. Even those who said ‘I am of Christ,’ were rebuked with the rest, who said ‘I am of Paul,’ or ‘I am of Apollos,’ or ‘I am of Cephas:’ for those who thus called themselves by the name of Christ, did so in the *same spirit*; and their language implied the uncharitable insinuation, that others did not love the Saviour so much as they. All this was utterly opposed to that prudent forbearance, that peaceableness, lowliness of mind, love, and union, which are the life and glory of a christian society.

SECTION III.

USE OF THE TERM SCHISM, IN ECCLESIASTICAL
HISTORY, AND IN MODERN TIMES.

ABOUT fifty years after the first schisms of the Corinthian church, the same spirit of discord again broke forth. As before, the discipline, and not the doctrine of the gospel, was concerned: nor does any formal separation appear to have taken place. The circumstances, however, were different. Instead of an almost idolatrous attachment to ministers, as formerly, there was now a want of sufficient respect for them. According to Clement, of Rome, certain presbyters were dismissed from their ministry, without cause; and much contention and confusion again prevailed.

With a view to exhort the Corinthians to peace and union, Clement wrote a persuasive, not an authoritative epistle, in the name of the Church of Rome; which Christian Society evidently took a brotherly and friendly interest in the welfare of the church of Corinth. For as yet, man had not assumed the right to issue edicts in the church of Christ; and there was no higher relation among Christians, than that of brethren. Schisms were deplored with all the tenderness of christian grief,

and rebuked with all the fidelity of christian honesty ; and every attempt which christian prudence and charity could dictate, was made to heal the mischief : but as yet, no effort was put forth to remedy these feuds by force of mere authority ; or to subdue the agitations of the church, by impairing its freedom.

Alluding to the state of the Corinthian church, previously to the present dissensions, the excellent Clement remarks : ‘ Ye were sincere, and without offence, and forgetful of mutual injuries. All faction ¹ and all schism ² were hateful to you. ³ In reference to existing evils, he thus proceeds : ‘ Blessed are those presbyters who have already finished their course, and have gained a fruitful and perfect dismissal : for they fear not lest any one should eject them from the place which has been appointed for them. For we learn that you have removed some from their offices, who ruled well, and blamelessly sustained the honor which had been conferred on them.’ ⁴ ‘ Your schism ⁵ has perverted many ; it has thrown many into despondency ; many into doubt ; and all of us into grief ; and yet this your dissension continues. Take into your hands the epistle of blessed Paul the apostle. What has he written to

¹ *στάσις.*

² *σχίσμα.*

³ Clement. Epist. ad Cor. cap. ii.

⁴ Ibid. cap. 44.

⁵ *σχίσμα.*

you in the first place, in the beginning of his gospel? Of a truth, he sent to you in the Spirit, both respecting himself, and Cephas, and Apollos; because, even then, there was a party spirit among you. But this brought less sin upon you; for ye were then partisans of those who had the testimony of being apostles, and of a man approved by them. But now, consider who they are that have perverted you, and have impaired your credit for a brotherly love which was everywhere spoken of. Base, my beloved brethren, yea, very base and unbecoming the christian vocation, is it—that it should be reported, that the firmly-settled and ancient church of the Corinthians, should, by means of one or two persons, excite factious insubordination against the presbyters. And this rumour has not only reached us, but also those who are ill-disposed towards us: so that through your folly, the name of the Lord is blasphemed, and danger is also incurred. Let us, therefore, remove this evil speedily, and let us fall down before the Lord, and weep; beseeching him that being propitious, he may be reconciled to us, and restore us to our becoming and holy conversation in brotherly love.’ *

It is clear that the term *schism* is here used precisely in the same sense as by the apostle Paul;

* Clement. Epist. ad Cor. xlvii. xlviii.

so as to denote internal strife among the members of a christian society, arising from some cause which has produced a breach of charity. The word frequently occurs with the same meaning, in ecclesiastical writers of various times. Thus Basil says, that ‘when dissensions arise respecting church-questions which might be agreed on, they are called schisms.’¹ Faustus, a Manichæan bishop, corrupted as Christianity was, in his system, with the Persian philosophy, entertained views with regard to *schism*, which were quite in harmony with those of Scripture: ‘Schism, if I mistake not,’ he remarks, ‘occurs, when any one who holds the same doctrine, and worships with the same rites, as the rest, is bent on nothing but dissension in the church.’² Here, *schism* is evidently understood to signify *disunion*, not necessarily involving separation. This agrees with the apostolical acceptance of the word; according to which, says Dr. Campbell, ‘men may be schismatics, or guilty of schism, by such an alienation of affection from their brethren, as violates the internal union subsisting in the hearts of Christians, though there

¹ σχίσματα . . . δι αἰτίας τινὰς ἐκκλησιαστικὰς καὶ ζητήματα ἰδίσιμα. Basil. Epist. Canon I. ad Amphilocho.

² Schisma, nisi fallor, est eadem opinantem atque eodem ritu colentem quo cæteri, solo congregationis delectari dissidio. Faustus, lxx. c. iii. ap. August.

be neither error in doctrine nor separation from communion, and consequently no violation of external unity in ceremonies and worship.’¹

The scripture-examples of schism, exhibit it as little different from variance, strife, faction; or even heresy,² in the original meaning of this term. But both schism and heresy early acquired a more precise meaning. *Heresy* came to be identical with important error in doctrine:³ while schism signified *separation* in worship and communion. Augustine, in the fifth century, defined schism to be ‘a recent separation in a church, on account of some difference of opinions;’ and heresy, ‘a separation of long standing.’⁴ We see here some trace of the New Testament signification of the term *heresy*;⁵ though the term *schism* is used in a more *ecclesiastical* sense. Zonarias⁶ thus expresses this sense, in his definition of the word ‘schismatics:’ ‘Those,’ says he, ‘are called schismatics, who are sound

¹ Campbell on the Gospels; Dissert. ix. Part iii. § 7.

² *ἑρῆσις* and *διχοστασίαι* are condemned 1 Cor. iii. 3, as in effect the same things as *σχίσματα*, and *αἵρέσεις*, 1 Cor. xi. 18. 19.

³ Vid. Ignat. Epist. ad Trall. cap. vi.

⁴ Schisma dicitur recens congregationis separatio, propter aliquam sententiarum diversitatem; cum fuerit inverterata, Hæresis vocatur. Augustin. adv. Crescon. lib ii. cap. vii.

⁵ See page 214, note.

⁶ About A. D. 1100.

as to faith and doctrine ; but who, for some reasons, separate, and form rival churches.*

Thus the *ecclesiastical* idea of schism, is *separation* from a particular christian assembly, and from its pastor or pastors, for some cause, supposed, by that church, to be insufficient or unlawful. That such a separation may proceed from a schismatical or contentious spirit, is unquestionable. When thus arising from an uncharitable temper, manifesting itself in faction, pride, self-sufficiency, or envy ; separation may, in perfect accordance with the spirit of the scripture-testimony, be regarded as a *finished act* of *schism*. Still, it is obvious that every case of separation from a christian church, must be judged of by its own merits ; and a complication of circumstances may often require to be taken into the account, before we are entitled to pronounce a given instance of separation schismatical, as arising from a state of mind at variance with the charity of the gospel.

When the light and love of the apostolic age had given place to a less spiritual and glorious period, we see a rapidly growing tendency to assert, in a lofty style, the claims of official autho-

* ἀποσχίζοντες καὶ ἀντισυνάγοντες. Zonarias ad Can. xxxiii. Concilii Laodicensi ; apud Suicer. Thesaur. in voc. Σχισματικὸς.

riety in the church. The apostles, notwithstanding their divine commission, were far from being forward to place themselves in the attitude of command; and they endeavoured, as much as possible, to bring the individual members of each church, to co-operate with them, in ordering the affairs which related to its administration. But the popular principle soon had to contend with the monarchico-ecclesiastical, which finally came forth triumphant from the struggle. The altered tone and manner, in which official authority began early to be enforced, is sufficiently evinced in the epistles ascribed to Ignatius.¹ This new ecclesiastical spirit, already exhibits an infancy of no ordinary vigour, in the numerous injunctions which occur in these epistles, on the subject of church-unity, and church-divisions.² These topics are almost invariably treated in connexion with the homage due to the officers of the church, and especially the bishop, or presiding minister in the assembly.³

In subsequent times, schism became an *ecclesiastical sin*; and it was now less regarded in the

¹ See page 131, etc. above.

² The term generally used by Ignatius, is *μερισμὸς*. He once employs *σχίσων*, to signify one who causes divisions. Epist. ad. Philad.

³ Vid. Ignat. Epist. *passim*. See also page 131, note 2 above.

light of a violation of charity, and of the common fraternal union, than as disobedience to superiors in the church. Cyprian, the great advocate for ecclesiastical power and supremacy, thus writes on the subject: ‘Schisms¹ arise from no other source than this, that the priest of God is not obeyed; nor is it considered that there should be but one priest and judge in a church, at a time, in the place of Christ.’² . . . ‘This is the rise, and the aim of Schismatics,³ who contrive mischief to please themselves;—they despise him who is set over them, through their swelling pride, and so they go off from the church. Thus a profane altar is erected without, and there is a rebellion against the peace of Christ, and the appointment and unity of God.’⁴ . . . ‘Hence, schisms and heresies arise; because the bishop, who is but one, and who presides over the church, is despised by the proud presumption of some; and a man who is honoured as worthy of God, is judged unworthy by men.’⁵ . . . ‘Thou oughtest to know that

¹ Schismata.

² *Unus sacerdos et iudex, etc.* Cypr. Epist. 55. § 6.

³ Schismaticorum.—It is worthy of remark, that the term ‘conventicle,’ is as old as the time of Cyprian: *Conventicula sibi diversa constituunt.* Cypr. de Unitat. § 10.

⁴ *Id.* Epist. 65. § 4.

⁵ *Id.* Epist. 69. § 4.

the bishop is in the church, and the church in the bishop ; and that any who are not with the bishop, are not in the church ; also, that they vainly flatter themselves, who, not having peace with the priests of God, creep about, and privately communicate, as they think, with some ; whereas the one catholic church is not rent, nor divided, but is connected and united by the cement of its mutually agreeing bishops.’¹

Cyprian must be allowed to have been a sincere and christian man, who, in many respects, entered into the true spirit of his office, and was ardently desirous of promoting the welfare of his own people, and of the universal church : but candid historians, of various parties, have admitted that his views of spiritual authority were carried to an extravagant and mistaken height. It cannot, indeed, be consistently doubted, that submission to the administration of the faithful pastors of the church, is a christian duty ;² and that a want of due regard to them is highly sinful, and may prove fatal to the unity and prosperity of christian societies. But lofty, unevangelical, Romanizing ideas of spiritual authority, and of official dignity in the church, will either tend to produce dissensions, or to substitute a mere conventional bond of unity, in place of the holy, humble, brotherly charity of the gospel.

¹ Id. Epist. 69. § 7. See also Cypr. de Unitat. § 5.

² Heb. xiii. 7. 17.

The exalted notions which prevailed respecting church-power, before the close of the third century, were attended with corresponding ideas as to the causes which, alone, were supposed to justify separation from a christian society. That an abandonment of the true faith, on the part of the church, either in the form of heresy, or formal apostasy, was a sufficient ground for such separation, could not be denied : ¹ but as to the propriety of separating for any other cause, there does not appear to have been so much unanimity of opinion. Irenæus maintained that Christians ‘ ought to separate from presbyters who had not the fear of God in their hearts,’ ² or were of immoral lives ; and an African synod, which was held in the middle of the third century, affirmed the same. ³ Different sentiments, however, on this point, appear to have been entertained by no less an authority, in his day, than Origen. This celebrated Father thus remarks : ‘ He that cares for his soul, will not be scandalized at the misdeeds of me, the public preacher in the church ; but considering the doctrine itself, and well pondering the faith of the church, he will dislike me, it is true, yet he will receive the doctrine of the

¹ Vid. Cypr. Epist. 68. § 1.—Irenæus contra Hæres. lib. 1. cap. 13. Origen. Homil. 7. in Ezechiel.

² Irenæus, lib. iv. cap. 44.

³ Apud Cypr. Epist. 68.

Lord, who says : The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, therefore all things which they say to you, hear and do, but according to their works do not ; for they say, and do not. Now this saying has reference to me, who teach what is good, and do the contrary, and who sit on the seat of Moses, as though I were a Scribe, or a Pharisee ; but the precept is to you, O people ! If you cannot accuse me of very corrupt doctrine, or of other opinions contrary to those of the church, but only behold my blameable way of life, and my sins ; you have not to frame your way of life according to mine, who instruct you, but according to what I say.' ¹

It is evident that this doctrine of Origen, which sixteen centuries have scarcely rendered obsolete, is little in harmony with the spirit of the frequent precepts contained in the apostolical epistles, respecting the duty of maintaining the purity of the church, and withdrawing from those who ' walk disorderly.' ² We see, moreover, here, *that* notion of a certain parallelism between Christianity and Judaism, which has proved the source of many errors, from the primitive to modern times. Hence, the idea of an analogy between the Aaronic priesthood, and Christian pastors. Thus Tertullian

¹ Origen. Homil. 7. in Ezechiel.

² 1 Thess. v. 14. 2 Thess. iii. 6. 11. 14.

calls the bishop ‘the *high priest*.’¹ Hence also, the distinction between ‘spiritual,’ and ‘temporal’ persons; and the supposition that the former² were, in a peculiar sense, the lot, or people of God, like the Levites in the Old Testament: whereas, according to the christian representations, all believers are ‘built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.’ . . . ‘Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.’³ Cyprian, too, was much imbued with this tendency to theocratic notions. The apostles, however, always kept in view the decided distinction which there is, in regard to all things external, between the spirit of Christianity and that of Judaism: and he who forms his ideas on the subject, from the New Testament alone, will be in little danger of confounding the two dispensations, in this respect; or of seeing any formal trace of the Jewish theocracy, in the new and spiritual institute of Christianity.

This adoption of the idea of the Mosaic priest-

¹ Summus Sacerdos. Tertull. de Baptismo, c. xvii.

² The clerici, or clergy, (κληρικοί, κλήρος τοῦ Θεοῦ.) In the same unevangelical sense, the term ‘church’ has, in modern times, come to mean the clergy, or ministers of the church.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 5. 9.

hood, in the christian church, and of the mystic dignity attaching to that order,* as forming a medium of communication between God and man, would naturally give a peculiar character to all internal dissensions, or *schisms*, (in the precise sense of the New Testament,) as well as to those separations, to which the name of *schism* was more especially attached, in after times. Where high conceptions of a divine right to spiritual authority were held, on *one* side, it would be easy for those who made this claim, to suppose that the *wrong*, in any given question, lay wholly on the *other* side. The traces of the mild and christian genius of the apostolic government, which sought to heal divisions, not by authority, but by love, and which allowed of considerable diversity of rites and customs, among believers, would necessarily be more and more lost in the church; till, at last, the most really conscientious scruples to obey any particular command issued by ecclesiastical authority, would readily be confounded with contumacious resistance to superiors.

Even were we to suppose differences of opinion and of usage, within the limits of essential truth, so to have affected the mode in which the christian worship was conducted, as to have led to distinct assemblies;—there would still have been

* Vid. Tertull. de Baptismo. cap. 17.

no reason why mutual charity might not have continued to subsist. But, in the progress of ecclesiastical power, nothing would suffice but passive obedience. Schism was, now, the act of an individual, who, for almost any cause, placed himself beyond the pale of that spiritual authority to which he had previously been subject; and the ‘horrid and detestable sin of schism,’¹ was often horrid and detestable, chiefly because it is so very *horrid* and *detestable* for man to have his own arbitrary will, and his desire of power, crossed by persons, who, it is imagined, ought implicitly to obey;—or to see his fond and carnal plans of compulsory religious uniformity, fail of being carried into effect. Hence the epithet ‘*schismatic*,’ has often been fixed on some of the most conscientious, and holy, and Christ-like men, who have ever adorned the church: and to these, has language been applied, similar to that of Cyprian; who describes the factious, proud, invidious separatist, as an ‘alien; for he can no longer have God for his father, who has not the church for his mother: and even if such persons were slain in the act of confessing the name of God, this blot would not be washed out with their blood.’²

¹ King’s Enquiry, Part i. ch. ix. § 8.

² Cypr. de Unitat. § 5.

It is humiliating to reflect, that a tendency to form uncharitable and exclusive judgments with regard to other professing Christians, has been but too marked a feature of the various sections of the religious world, in general. There has scarcely been a denomination in Christendom, which has not, at some period of its history, either in so many words, or virtually by its practices, assumed that it was ‘*the only true church* ;’ while it has been ready to regard all other forms, customs, and opinions, beside its own, as ‘heresy’ and ‘schism ;’ or even openly to brand them with these hateful names. * This antichristian spirit has been the more remarkable, from its having manifested itself, in a decided form, among those whose confessions of faith have been essentially *one*, as to the great outlines of the christian doctrine.

Thus, in proportion as the universal church declined from the natural simplicity of its moral and spiritual life in Christ, and from its first pure and spontaneous fraternal love,—one of two alternatives, was to be expected : either frequent conflicts ;—

* ‘Heresie and Schism, as they are in common use,’ says Hales of Eton, ‘are two Theological *μορμῶ*, or *scarcrows*, which they who uphold a party in Religion, use to fright away such, as making inquiry into it, are ready to relinquish and oppose it, if it appear either erroneous or suspicious.’ Hales’s Tracts, 1677. p. 191.

partly between one corruption and another; partly between the lingering spirit of the ancient genuine and unworldly Christianity, and the growing mass of human ideas and inventions which were ever incorporating themselves with it:—or the final alternative of one general, uniform suspension of the energy and vigour of the spiritual life, over the whole body of the church. Something nearly approaching to this crisis, was gradually brought on, by the successive inroads of power and superstition, till the ‘Man of Sin,’—himself the most enormous example and combination of all that is apostate, heretical, and schismatical—anathematized all, as guilty of apostasy, heresy, schism, and impious rebellion, who did not fall prostrate at his footstool.

The same spirit which induced the Romish church to pronounce Protestantism ‘the Schism of Luther,’ has been but too closely imitated by Protestants themselves; and instead of schism being regarded, as it is in scripture, as whatever tends to alienate and divide Christians one from another, for the sake of uniting them to a party; the illiterate and simple-minded are sometimes taught, in the true spirit of Rome, that it is a ‘disregard of *church-authority*,’ *that is*, forming a union with an ‘unauthorized congregation, in defiance of the solemnly declared will of the

Almighty :’* in other words, (for this is the true interpretation,) schism is such an exercise of the right of private judgment, as may lead a man to act on the principle, that other churches may be as ‘apostolic’ as that which may exclusively claim a ‘divine right;’ or which the court and the government may happen to have adopted, in any particular country. So long as human authority, and tradition, are placed on a level scarcely inferior to that of inspiration, these partial and unscriptural views respecting schism and unity, will continue to prevail; we shall still hear of some one denomination of Christians claiming to be ‘*the only true Church* ;’ while all the other christian bodies in a nation, are ‘sects;’ their members ‘sectarians,’ ‘separatists,’ and ‘schismatics;’ and the most conscientious and peaceable maintenance of their own church-form and order, is ‘sectarianism,’ and ‘schism.’

It even appears that, with the progress of time, there has been, continually, a wider departure from the scripture-meaning of the word ‘schism,’ which we repeat, is, essentially, alienation of heart between Christians, however it may arise; manifesting itself in uncharitable, contentious conduct. This

* Tracts for the Times, 1833-4. Oxford. vol. i. No. 30, containing a dialogue between John Evans and Dr. Spencer.

New-Testament signification, was first given up, for that of *actual separation* from a particular church and bishop, with whom those who separated had previously been in actual communion; agreeably with the definition of Hales of Eton: 'Schism is nothing else but an unnecessary separation of Christians from that part of the visible Church, of which they were once Members.'* But the charge of schism has not ceased to be repeated, even in cases of long-established secession from a particular body of Christians. In modern ecclesiastical phraseology, those are often called 'schismatics,' who have never actually divided from any church, or denomination; but who have remained attached, from mature conviction, to that form and order to which they have been accustomed from their earliest years.

Schism is thus considered as a kind of *original sin*. It is supposed to taint the posterity of those who first incurred the charge of being guilty of it. It flows in the veins of their successive descendants, from age to age; and they are regarded in the light of a race of men among whom there constantly exists an infectious disorder, and who ought to be put under a perpetual quarantine. Their piety, character, conscientiousness, intelligence, and numbers, form but a feeble plea on their behalf. Nay, the very circumstance of their influ-

* Hales's Tracts; 1677. p. 195.

ence in society, and their numerical importance, has often caused them to be viewed with less charity; and to be dealt with less as erring brethren, who may still be included within the pale of visible Christianity, than as natural enemies, who are to be dreaded! Schism is thus regarded as hereditary rebellion against the authority of a particular church, which assumes that itself, alone, is apostolical. Nay, we may even find those spoken of as ‘schismatics’ in relation to one form of Protestantism, who peaceably adhere to another, which originally separated from Romanism, as independently as that form itself.* Hence the most modern notion of schism, held by those who take ecclesiastical views of it, would seem to be, that it consists simply in *not belonging* to *their* communion.

The subject may be further illustrated, by a few extracts from a recent work, which has already been quoted. ‘The offence against communion is called schism; and schism, in its extremest degree, is *separation*, *dissent*, or (as it is sometimes called) *heresy* Voluntary separation from the church of Christ is a sin which, unless repented of, is eternally destructive to the soul. The heinous nature of this offence is incapable of exaggeration, because no human imagination, and no human tongue, can adequately describe its

* See page 248. Also M’Crie’s *Life of Knox*; vol. i. p. 101.

enormity *Separation from the church is incapable of justification.* No excuse can be admitted in the case of a positive and deadly sin, except the plea of *ignorance* Separation from a christian church is incapable of excuse, no reason can possibly justify it, and the society formed by such an act of separation, is entirely cut off from christian unity, and from the true church of Christ.'

' This fixes ineffaceably the mark of schism on the origin of all those communities which separated themselves from the British churches. For they not only separated themselves from this branch of the visible catholic church, but did so on principles which involved separation from every other part of the church equally ; and accordingly they held communion with no church which existed previously to their separation, nor were they acknowledged afterwards by any ancient church as a portion of the church of Christ.'

' Their (the Dissenters') separation from the church of England was founded not only in schism, but in heresy ; and this being the case, they could not have been any part of the church of Christ, nor were they capable of forming christian churches Dissenting communities are *human* societies. The will of man makes them, regulates them, unmakes them. They are, in a word, purely voluntary associations ; and there-

fore cannot be any part of that church which is formed by the divine command, and by means instituted by God, and from which man cannot separate without most grievous sin.’

‘ The Presbyterians (of Scotland) were innovators Their *opinion* was erroneous, but had it merely extended to a preference for the presbyterian form, it might have been in some degree tolerated : it would not have cut them off from the church of Christ : but it was the exaggeration of their opinion : their *separation* for the sake of this opinion, their actual rejection of the authority and communion of the existing successors of the apostles in Scotland, and therefore of the universal church in all ages, that marks them out as schismatics ; and all the temporal enactments and powers of the whole world would not cure this fault, nor render them a portion of the church of Christ With regard to all the other sects in Scotland, which have seceded from the Presbyterian community . . . the same observations apply to them all. Their predecessors, the Presbyterians, voluntarily separated themselves from the catholic church of Christ, and they, in departing from the Presbyterian communion, have not yet returned to that of the true church. Consequently, they form no part of the church of Christ.’*

* A Treatise on the Church of Christ : designed chiefly

Such are the views respecting the church of Christ, unity, and schism, which are proposed for the instruction of each successive race of students in theology, who are prepared, at the University of Oxford, to be spiritual guides, and interpreters of the will of Christ, to mankind. These young men, who are to '*teach others also*,' are taught that 'the state has a right when necessary, to oblige the members of the church, by temporal penalties, to submit to her ordinances. . It has a right to prevent persons from separating from her communion.' Yet the author strangely advocates 'toleration,' 'if experience show that penalties have in vain been employed, to secure obedience: if a schism be *formed and established*: if it be obviously in vain to expect any good results from measures of compulsion.' *

The above extracts are a specimen of doctrines which, after having been supposed to be nearly obsolete, have, in our day, been revived; and which scarcely seem, at present, to have attained their full development. Separation from a *human opinion*, is here identified with separation from the unity of the universal *church of Christ*. . The

for the Use of Students in Theology. By the Rev. William Palmer, M.A. of Worcester College, Oxford. Vol. i. Part i. chap. iv. Section 2; chap. xii. Section i. iii; and Part ii. chap. i.

* Id. vol. ii. part v. chap. viii.

formation of 'purely voluntary associations,' is regarded as an exercise of the 'will of man,' incompatible with the idea of the christian church being instituted by 'the divine command.' But how, we may ask, can an intelligent obedience be rendered to the commands of God, otherwise than voluntarily? Acts of repentance and of faith, are the objects of 'divine command;' yet they are *essentially voluntary*. Again, the simple preference of the Scottish Presbyterians, for the platform of Geneva, 'would not,' it seems, 'have cut them off from the church of Christ:' but their *separation* from Rome, without retaining Episcopacy, was fatal to unity. In other words, if their offence had extended no farther than conscientiously believing, in private, that the Presbyterian discipline was more accordant with the will of Christ than the Episcopalian, this liberty of bare opinion, * 'might have been, in some degree, tolerated;' but their *acting* on the principle of this conscientious belief, by worshipping God accordingly, 'marks them out as schismatics;' and they, and all who belong to the christian communities that have originated from them, are declared (miserable men!) to 'form no part of the church of Christ!'

Such is the awful sentence which is pronounced on those Scottish martyrs, thousands of whom suffered on the gibbet, or were butchered in the

See page 175, above.

mass, by the armed savages, sent by Charles the Second and his brother James, to dragoon them into conformity to prelacy! Of such commemoration are *they* thought worthy, who, for conscientious adherence to the Presbyterian worship,¹ endured torture, imprisonment, exile, and death, on a scale, worthy of the persecutions inflicted on the Christians, by heathen Rome; and which Rome ecclesiastical did not equal, when the darkness in which she had enveloped the Scottish nation, was ‘made visible’ by the flames of martyrdom, in which Hamilton, Mill, and Wishart, were consumed! These new martyrs to conscience, are declared to be ‘*schismatics* ;’ and ‘no part of the church of Christ!’ Such, also, is the judgment held to be due to the two thousand English Confessors, of 1662. ‘Their separation from the church of England was founded, not only in schism, but in heresy; and this being the case, they could not have been any part of the church of Christ.’²—The Guthries, Govans, and Learmonth of Scotland; and the Howes, Baxters, and Flavels of England;—the Erskines and M’Cries, who belonged to Christian bodies derived from the Church of which the former were ornaments; and the Doddridges and Wattses,

¹ See Howie’s Scots Worthies, 1828—9.

² Palmer’s Treatise on the church of Christ. Vol. i. Part i. chap. xiii. section 1.

who have trodden in the footsteps of the latter—‘no part of the church of Christ’!—It is worthy of these sentiments, that what is denied to those who are termed ‘the Presbyterian and Puritan schismatics,’¹ should be freely conceded to Romanists; and that while the ‘Roman churches’ are declared ‘still to continue a portion of the Catholic church of Christ!’² the Puritans, and the Covenanters, and all who have resembled them, should be consigned to perdition, as ‘*totally separated from the church of God.*’³

As to ‘toleration,’—what is it, on the above principles, short of ecclesiastical despotism succumbing to necessity; and finally ceasing from the work of persecution, when confiscation, and banishment, and the dungeon, and the rack, and the executioner, have done their worst to produce conformity, *in vain*?—But we will not further pursue these doctrines through the inconsistencies, gratuitous assumptions, and sometimes unintelligible statements, which they involve. It may suffice to leave them to be compared with the *inferences*, which we shall now endeavour to deduce from the scripture-doctrine respecting Schism. One remark, however, may be permitted; which is—that, next to the unfeigned *sorrow*, which it is most natural for a christian mind to feel, on the

¹ Ibid. chap. xi. section ii.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. chap. iv. section ii.

perusal of sentiments so contrary to those of the New Testament, the first conviction can scarcely fail to be, that language like the above, issuing from the high places of the church, sounds somewhat *ominous* :—ominous, *not* (we would fain trust) of serious danger to civil and religious liberty, or to the cause of true Protestantism, in general ;—but ominous of ‘danger’ to any church in which such doctrines might prevail. It should be remembered that we are not, now, living in the dead calm of the dark ages, when scarce a breath ruffled the vast expanse of ecclesiastical domination. Nor is the ‘supremacy’ of our times, practically, the supremacy of Henry, or Elizabeth, or of the Stuarts. Those days are past. *We* are living after mighty moral earthquakes have shaken the world, both political and ecclesiastical ; and a period is approaching, when the elements of knowledge, and therefore the food of reflection, will be within the grasp of millions, who were previously doomed to ignorance. Religion cannot remain unaffected by the change. It will not always be said that ‘Ignorance is the mother of devotion.’ Infidelity will, one day, be compelled to fly to other opiates, in order to lull conscience. Religion will be perpetually tending to assert her freedom from the chain of human power, and human invention ; and to purify herself from all that is not genuine, and divine, and

really apostolic. The spirit of inquiry and of liberty, that achieved the Reformation, is still awake and abroad; and the *degeneracy* of that spirit into rationalism and infidelity, which has too often been witnessed within the last half century, does but render still more injurious to Christianity, the opposite extreme, of a Protestantism, so called, which, though boasting of emancipation from the yoke of Rome, seems retrograding, so decidedly, towards the doctrines of the ‘infallible church,’ that even those who are likely to be the most candid judges, admit that ‘it is very difficult to trace any distinction.’

It requires not the gift of prophecy, surely, to justify the assertion—that little more is wanting to any Protestant communion, than for such opinions as those which have of late been advanced, in some quarters, to become general within its pale,—in order to its days, as a denomination, being ‘numbered,’ like those of *him* to whom ‘there was given a mouth speaking great things;’ ‘and power to continue’ for his ‘*times*.’* The CHURCH OF CHRIST will survive all the changes which may occur, in the social and political condition of man; but in proportion as *human forms* of the church are based on anti-christian principles, these forms will, one day, be found to have been quite distinct from the ‘kingdom which cannot be moved;’ and

* Rev. xiii. 5. Dan. xii. 7.

to have been among the ‘things that are shaken; that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.’¹

SECTION IV.

INFERENCES FROM THE SCRIPTURE-DOCTRINE OF SCHISM.

To every unprejudiced mind that is acquainted with the history of religion, it must appear evident, that there are few terms in theology which have undergone a greater change from their original signification, than the word *schism*. In the scripture-examples and exhortations, we have seen that schism is viewed in immediate relation to that charity, to which it is really opposed: but, in the sense in which it is commonly understood, it is regarded, almost exclusively, as a sin against church-authority, founded either on a supposed divine right, or on the will of the magistrate.²

¹ Heb. xii. 27. 28.

² In this country, whatever opinions many may entertain of the former, the latter is evidently the ostensible basis of the Established Churches: for the *government*, by identifying itself with Presbyterianism in Scotland, as well as with Episcopacy in England, plainly shows that it feels

What sedition and revolt are, in reference to the civil government,—such has schism been considered to be, in regard to power ecclesiastical. Schism has been another name for rebellion against spiritual superiors, and separation from their jurisdiction. Hence, where the civil ruler is also ‘head of the church,’ combining, to a certain extent, in his own person, the functions of magistrate and priest, Schism has sometimes been treated, not merely as an ecclesiastical offence, but also as a state-crime: and it has been punished accordingly; as is abundantly exemplified in the history of Protestant Europe.

This departure from the true scripture-use of the term, has contributed, not a little, to increase, and to perpetuate, the real thing signified—dissension among Christians. There has been, as some one has remarked, a ‘*schism*’ respecting the meaning of the word itself: for the charge of being a ‘schismatic,’ has often been most unjustly made; and has thus served to promote that ill-will and strife, which is of the very essence of the evil of

itself bound by no views of exclusive *divine right* for either of these forms. For abundant testimonies proving that, in the time of Edward VI., Elizabeth, and James I., Episcopacy clearly rested on the principle of ‘ascribing the particular Form of Government in the Church, to the determination of the Supreme Magistrate;’—see Stillingfleet’s *Irenicum*, Part ii. chap. viii.

schism. Is it not high time that the professed followers of Christ, no longer carried away with a zeal that is ‘not according to knowledge,’ should cease to use technical terms of mutual reproach, without discrimination; and should endeavour, with seriousness and candour, to ascertain the real character of the mischief which they condemn?

With a further view to this object, several *inferences* appear capable of being deduced from those facts and statements of Scripture, which have already been brought forward. From these, it is evident, that in its immediate reference to the church of Christ, SCHISM IS AN EVIL EXISTING AMONG PROFESSED CHRISTIANS, AS SUCH. The division (schism) which took place respecting the Messiah, between those Jews who rejected, and those who appeared willing to receive him,* was an opposition of parties; one of which, it would seem, was composed of decidedly worldly men:—the other, of those who were inclined to become Christians. Schism, in its *church-sense*, however, does not imply a contention between the world on the one side, and the church on the other; but is limited to the pale of visible Christianity. As natural benevolence is not *christian love*; so schism is something different from the mere interruption of earthly friendship, or neighbourly feeling, either between men of the world

* John vii. 20. 41.

among themselves, or between them and Christians. Schism, as related to the church, is a spiritual sin, opposed to spiritual unity. The dislocation of a limb, implies its connexion with the human frame; and schism supposes a previous union of the members of the mystical body of Christ; a union in 'one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism' of the Holy Ghost.

Hence, the persecution of the church, by unbelievers, grievous as is this offence against Christ,¹ is not schism. It is true that, in some cases, the line of demarcation between such persecution and schism, may be difficult to define: for, in the erection of the christian church, unwise builders have ever used 'untempered mortar';² and have piled up 'wood, hay, and stubble,'³ instead of 'living stones,'⁴ on the 'foundation, which is Jesus Christ.'⁵ There has been, as in the case of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, a juxta-position of discordant materials, but no amalgamation. The true, simple, apostolical idea of the church, as consisting of persons who give evidence of possessing a *certain state of mind*, has been lost sight of, and buried, under that mass of human invention and corruption, which had been accumulating from the second century, till the time when this Augean stable began to be cleansed by the Reformation.

¹ Acts ix. 4. ² Ezek. xiii. 10. ³ 1 Cor. iii. 12.

⁴ 1 Pet. ii. 5. ⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Under the appellation of ‘the church,’ there has still too often remained, a mere accidental, geographical, political, nominal association—not a spiritual union;—an admixture—not a combination. It may not always, therefore, be easy to say where schism among Christians ends, and persecution from worldly men, nominally of the church, begins. But, at all events, it will be granted that a ‘*schismatic*’ is properly such—only *as an avowed and professed Christian*.

It is plain, also, that schism, in its *strictest sense*, takes place BETWEEN MEMBERS OF ONE AND THE SAME PARTICULAR CHURCH OR ASSEMBLY OF CHRISTIANS. The church at Corinth was a society of persons, whom, in the judgment of charity, the apostle addressed, as ‘sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints;’ and who ‘came together’ ‘in the church,’ or ‘into one place,’ for the celebration of divine ordinances.* They were in the habit of worshipping and communing with each other: and, no doubt, the closest intimacy had prevailed between them, as collected from the heathen world, and thus belonging to the same individual church, or (in the language of the New Testament) assembly, of Christians. Their schisms consisted, as we have seen, in their mutual contentions, their internal and party divisions. Hence, Dr. Owen remarks, that he who is guilty of

* 1 Cor. i. 2; xi. 18. 20.

the sin of schism, ‘ must be a member of some one church constituted by Jesus Christ : in it he raises causeless differences with others, to the interruption of christian love, and to the disturbance of the due performance of the duties required of the church in the worship of God.’*

Yet, though the actual examples of the New Testament, are confined to the dissensions of one particular society, it appears to be perfectly consistent with the *spirit* of the scripture-meaning of the term, to regard schism as that which, virtually, and in substance, MAY EXIST BETWEEN PROFESSED CHRISTIANS WHO BELONG TO DIFFERENT CONGREGATIONS, OR TO DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS. Though the union which subsists between members of the same assembly, and who unite together in the same communion, ought to be specially marked by mutual confidence and charity ; yet this *particular* relation by no means interferes with the sense of unity which Christians should feel, with the universal church. On the contrary, as the domestic circle, which draws forth the private affections, is the best nursery for general benevolence ; so the fellowship of Christians in a church, prepares them to exercise an expansive charity towards the whole ‘ household of faith.’ The attraction which holds together among themselves, the particles of each of the planetary bodies, intimate as

* Owen Of Schism. Oxon. 1657.

it is, does not prevent *each* body, and each particle of it, from feeling the force of the attraction of all the rest. And as it is conceivable, not only that one of these bodies might be shattered by an internal convulsion; but that either the whole of it, or a separated fragment, might wander from its centre, and lose its connexion with the system: so may Christians not only be alienated from each other, in the same society; but also, from Christians of other societies: or one Christian community may have uncharitable differences with another. When the apostle Paul, representing the church, allegorically, under the image of the human frame, teaches that God has so ‘tempered the body together,’ as ‘that there should be no *schism* in the body;’ we cannot suppose that the application was intended to be restricted to the avoidance of internal Schism in particular churches, merely; but rather that the allegory was designed to have a reference to the whole, and every part of the spiritual body of Christ. Hence the general definition of Schism, given by Firmin, as ‘the solution of that unity, which Christ requires in his church.’*

Again: ALL SCHISM, HOWEVER ARISING, AND TO WHATEVER DEGREE MANIFESTED, IS, IN ITS ESSENCE, A DISRUPTION OF THE BOND OF CHARITY. Love is the one soul of unity; but the

* Giles Firmin Of Schism, 1658.

name of schism is ‘legion;’ for it is possessed by many unclean spirits :—selfishness—alienation of heart — pride—jealousy—envy—wrath—strife—mutual recrimination—false accusation—censoriousness—clamour—the demon of anarchy—the lust of power—the spirit of excommunication, anathema, and condemnation. Schism is, in every case, a sin against the christian obligation to unity and love; though, as we have already seen, narrow and unscriptural views may be entertained, respecting the true basis of this unity, and the ways in which sin may be committed by its violation. Wherever there is a breach of charity, tending to dissension, among the professed disciples of the Saviour, whether meeting for worship under the same roof, or belonging to the same denomination, or not,—*there* are the unchristian tempers, which are the baneful principle and element of all schism. That among the various forms of evil which a schismatical spirit may assume, *one* is a refusal to submit to christian order and discipline, and to faithful pastors,¹ as the chosen guides and organs of the churches, cannot be denied: for this conduct is clearly a breach of charity, as inculcated in the apostolical exhortation, to ‘esteem’ ministers ‘very highly *in love* for their work’s sake.’² Into this error the Corinthians fell, in the time of Clement of Rome;³ when they un-

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.² 1 Thess. v. 13.³ See page 228.

justly ejected some of their Presbyters from office. But the schisms mentioned in the epistle of St. Paul, are condemned, not as disobedience to constituted authority in the church, (much as this authority must have been disregarded,) but rather, as outrages against charity, decency, and unity in general.

It follows that SCHISM MAY EXIST WHERE THERE IS NO SEPARATION. This was the precise case of the Corinthians. United, as to doctrine and worship, under one and the same government and discipline; associated in communion; externally, so organized, and in the judgment of charity, so morally changed from what they once had been, as to be addressed by an apostle, as a ‘church of God,’ they furnish the only example, in which the term ‘Schism’ is applied, by the writers of the New Testament, to disorders in a christian society. This circumstance not only shows that schism, in the apostolic sense, does not necessarily involve separation; but that it had not, originally, a meaning essentially different from what is signified, in various shades and degrees, by ‘variance,’ ‘emulations,’ ‘strife,’ or ‘contention,’ ‘seditions,’ heresies,’¹ ‘disputings,’ or ‘confusion,’² in a christian church. For, as the schisms of the Corinthians were not actual *divisions* of the

¹ See page 214, note.

² Gal. v. 20. Philip. ii. 14. James iii. 16.

society and its communion, into separate congregations, they were evidently mischiefs of exactly the same kind, as are described in other passages of scripture, by some of the above terms: so that schisms, and all the other uncharitable tempers which are signified by these terms, may be regarded as belonging to one and the same climax of evils.* It is probable, therefore, that *schism* would not have been the name for an ecclesiastical sin, more than ‘*variance*,’ ‘*strife*,’ ‘*seditions*,’ (dissensions, or factions,) or the like,—had not the literal signification of *external division*, superseded the figurative and apostolical meaning, in proportion as the claim to high spiritual authority advanced; till *unity* became almost identified with passive obedience to ecclesiastical superiors, and *schism* with separation from their sphere of power, for almost any cause.

Without the withdrawment, however, or the ejection, just or unjust, of any part of the christian society, from the communion; there may, evidently, be disorders which, for the time being, are seriously destructive of unity:—as a disease which rages in some limb of the body, may keep the whole in a feverish and unhealthy state;

* ‘The word *σχίσμα* here, (1 Cor. xi. 18.) and in i. 10, denotes, not *separation from the Church*, but *dissensions in it*, and is synonymous with *ἀιρέσεις*, just after, and *ἐρις καὶ διχοστασίαι*, at iii. 3.’ Bloomfield’s Recensio, *in loc.*

compared with which, even amputation might be a good. Or schism may prove fatal to the vital piety of a whole church, while the 'name to live' still exists, in forms and ordinances: and, under the disastrous influence of selfish, factious, and party feeling, the spiritual body may resemble a mangled carcase, the hewn and lacerated parts of which, remain, indeed, in apposition with each other, but have no union, and are in a state of disorganization, and decomposition.

It is also evident, that THERE MAY BE MUCH OF A SCHISMATICAL SPIRIT, EVEN WHERE THERE IS NO NOTORIOUS VIOLATION OF PEACE, DECENCY, AND ORDER. As all moral evils have their beginnings, as well as their maturity; it is probable that the schisms at Corinth were some time before they reached the alarming height, which rendered them matter of public report, and apostolic rebuke. They would pass through intermediate stages, before they proceeded to that extent, which has made them the subject of history, and a blot on the memory of the Corinthian church, to all times. Hence, where there may be less of manifest variance, and of vulgar disorder, than there was at Corinth, the essence of schism may exist, in considerable force, and produce great present injury to a christian church, even if it be not the precursor of violent broils. There may, from a variety of causes, be such a want of cordiality, such a

feeling of distance, or even of repugnance, between the professed members of Christ, as to resemble an armed neutrality ; and the elements of discord may rankle within minds, though there be no open war. Where no adverse parties are formed, engaging in actual strife, there may still be separation of spirit, more or less, among those who are nominally one, and who ought to be really one, in Christ. There may be heart-burnings unallayed—the reserved demeanour—the averted look—the cold carriage—the avoidance of contact, either among those who do, or do not belong to the same society, or to the same denominational church. All this may exist, with no public rupture, or outward collision. The flame of brotherly love may have sunk, and dwindled on the altar ; and in the absence of this purifying fire, the evil spirit of schism may be lurking secretly in the sanctuary, though its voice be not heard aloud. A community of professing Christians may be pervaded by such a spirit—mutual charity may be so dead—and there may be such a want of union—or even such an alienation, between those, whose hearts should be ‘ knit together in love,’* that a comparatively trivial occasion may suffice to produce a direct breach: as a building, in the walls of which, crevices have been formed by a settlement, might be ill-prepared for resisting

* Col. ii. 2.

a storm, which would not affect a substantial, and consolidated edifice.

It may further be inferred from the apostolical account of the dissensions at Corinth, that THE QUESTION—WHEN DOES SEPARATION IN WORSHIP AND COMMUNION INVOLVE THE GUILT OF SCHISM?—CAN BE DETERMINED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WORD OF GOD, ONLY BY A VIEW OF THE NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE. Had the Corinthian schisms gone on to factious separation, this issue would not have destroyed, but rather have still more completely marked their character. They would, then, have been *schisms*, with the aggravation of an actual development and consummation of their final tendency. Even though separation, had it taken place, might, at once, have hushed the storm of parties, yet it would, *in itself*, have been a new evil; especially as shewing, more decisively, the *violence* of the schismatical spirit, and the hopelessness of that mutual reconciliation, which was the true remedy for these unhappy strifes, among Christians who professed to be united, in the faith and practice of the gospel. That such reconciliation actually took place, we have reason to believe, from the epistle of Clement, written half a century after these lamentable events.

Had separation, however, ensued—had the unity of the Corinthian church received its final

blow, by actual division, the guilt would, of course, have rested with the authors, the fomenters, and the finishers of the mischief; on whichever side they were found, or to whatever party they belonged. Had the separation occurred on account of the favoritism and partisanship, occasioned by the overweening fondness that was cherished towards the different ministers, the evil would have lain at the door of all the contending parties;—perhaps equally; perhaps in different degrees. Had the disorders at the Lord's Supper proved so incurable, as that no remonstrances, not even those of an apostle, availed to repress them, and had they led to a division of the disorderly portion of the society, from those, if such there were, who remained peaceable, and consistent—a division, either by means of a factious secession on the part of the former, or by an act of christian discipline on the part of the latter: or, had these orderly and quiet members of the church, either peaceably withdrawn, hopeless of the return of departed charity, after they had made long, and painful, though useless endeavours, to restore it; or had they been ejected by a predominant faction, for the very reason that they were not factious;—can it be doubted, for a moment, where would have been the blame?

It may safely be affirmed, that *wherever separation, in worship and communion, takes place in an*

uncharitable spirit, it cannot fail to involve more or less, of what may be termed schismatical. Grant that there may be cases in which separation is allowable, or even desirable, or incumbent; still the *manner* of effecting, or maintaining it, may be such, as to tincture it with the stain of schism. Let us suppose that some of the first Gentile converts, intimidated by the bold assertions of the judaizing teachers, had superstitiously submitted, against their own unbiassed convictions, to unite with Jewish Christians, in certain acts of Mosaic worship and observance—these converts, when they became more fully aware of the liberal and catholic genius of the gospel, in relation to things external, as explained by the apostles,¹ would have done wrong, in not using the ‘liberty wherewith Christ had made them free’ from ‘the yoke of bondage.’² But had they, while thus declining further to participate in ceremonies and customs to which they conscientiously objected, made the attempt to force the Jewish believers to relinquish *their* convictions of duty, or passed harsh judgments on them for not so doing; their conduct could not have been defended from being of a schismatical character—because uncharitable, and calculated to lead to dissensions among Christians. It should never be forgotten, that conduct of this description, breathes the true spirit, and the essential nature of schism.

¹ See Part i. chap. viii. section ii.

² Gal. v. i.

Separation in worship and communion, or from christian intercourse, can take place, only in *three ways* ; either by external necessity ; or by excommunication ; or voluntarily. Persecution, illness, or removal to a distant place, as they originate in *External Necessity*, may be causes of separation admitting no remedy. *Excommunication*, or the cutting off of one, or of any number of individuals, from church-communion ; and *Voluntary Separation*—exemplified in the withdrawment of such individuals, of their own accord,—or in the dissolution of a christian society, for whatever cause, by the act of its own members :—are separations involving moral considerations, and are either lawful or unlawful, according to circumstances.

That *there are many cases, in which separation by excommunication does not imply guilt on the part of the christian church by which this last act of discipline is performed, is universally agreed* : as is evident from the practice which has uniformly prevailed. Nay—a christian society, making no provision for the exclusion of the unworthy, and for securing purity of communion, would evince a departure from the apostolic spirit, utterly fatal to the design of the christian institute ; which is, the preservation of the church, as distinct from the world. For nothing can be more indubitable in the history of

Christianity, than that in the apostolic churches, all the members of each society were personally united, in the maintenance of discipline. This is evident, both from apostolic precept, and precedent; * and has never, that we are aware, been denied. The civil legislative authority, and the system of ecclesiastical courts, which, from the time of Constantine, began to confound all things, divine and human, in one mass, became, it is true, especially in the West, the shadow of the simple, but effective moral discipline of the ancient apostolic church. But before this change took place, which, in its progress, paralyzed the right arm of Christianity—before arbitrary laws, and temporal penalties, against spiritual offences, were substituted for the solemn voice of the christian assembly—nothing was so fearful, on earth, as that verdict, which was doubtless, often, a faithful echo of the voice of Christ himself. The numbers by whom it was uttered, would be a greater security for its justice, than though it had been left to the private feelings of one, or a few individuals: united suffrages would give it greater weight; and when it emanated from a society of holy men, whose moral worth was such, as to exemplify ‘how awful goodness is;’ the very circumstance of the sen-

* 1 Cor. v. 4. 5. 11. 13. 2 Cor. ii. 5—10. 2 John 9. 10. 11. See also pages 45. 46. 157. 158, above.

tence of excommunication being pronounced independently of all secular, and all mere official ecclesiastical authority, would cause it to be regarded as more entirely spiritual; and to fall, as the sword of the Spirit, more nakedly and keenly upon the conscience.

It is evident that just acts of christian discipline, as such, have no connexion with schism; unless, indeed, accidentally; since a schismatical temper may be the offence which calls for interference. Hence, the apostle Paul says to Titus: ‘A man that is a heretic,* (a man given to making divisions in the church,) after the first and second admonition, reject.’ Many delinquencies, however, render the last act of discipline necessary, which have no immediate relation to schism. Apostasy from the faith, for example, taking place in a christian society, is not a case resembling the dislocation of a limb that may be replaced, but is rather the mortification of a part, which, if it be not removed, may soon prove fatal to the whole body. Similar remarks apply to various cases of flagrant departure from the doctrine, or the practice of the gospel. Some of the most awful threatenings of ‘The Alpha and the Omega,’ in the Apocalypse, are founded on the fact, that in some of the churches of Asia, doctrines and practices were ‘*suffered*,’ which were entirely sub-

* αἵρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον. Tit. iii. 10. See page 214, note.

versive of christian piety.¹ To ‘put away the wicked,’² and to ‘withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly,’³ are express apostolical commands. That to ‘walk disorderly,’ however, was not, *peaceably to differ from others on external points*, is too evident, from the apostolic exhortations respecting meats, days, and the Mosaic law in general, to require further comment.⁴ The apostle Paul, moreover, explains his own meaning, by adding : ‘For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, *working* not at all, but are *busy-bodies*. Now them that are such we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. . . And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.’⁵ Either to separate others, therefore, from the communion, or to separate *from* others, as christian prudence, and circumstances, may require, is obviously, in some cases, an imperative duty of believers, though it may cost them deep and heart-felt pangs. Nay—painful as is the contemplation, the bond of charity may, possibly, be so far destroyed, that the formal dissolution of a christian society, may sometimes be the only mode of commencing its restoration.

¹ Rev. ii. 12—23. ² 1 Cor. v. 13. ³ 2 Thess. iii. 6.

⁴ See page 60—74. ⁵ 2 Thess. iii. 11—14.

On the other hand, nothing is more plain, than that *the sentence of excommunication, and exclusive measures in general, may be flagrantly schismatical*. Such was the conduct, already alluded to, of Victor, bishop of Rome ; when, having presumed to dictate to the christian world respecting the precise time of observing Easter, on the refusal of the churches of Asia Minor to relinquish their own views of this disputed external point, he insolently published against them, an edict of excommunication.

Many of the contents which ended in separation, among the orthodox of the first three centuries, related to the moral discipline of the church, and especially to the *Lapsi*, or fallen brethren. Of this character, were the divisions known by the names of the ‘schisms’ of Felicissimus, and Miletius, in Egypt ; the controversy between Stephanus, bishop of Rome, and the African churches ; and the more extensive ‘schisms’ of the Novatians, and the Donatists. Several of these separations were closely blended with the contests of church-power ; and mutual excommunication, in which neither party was free from blame, was often the result.

The behaviour of Stephanus, towards Cyprian, and the African churches, was eminently schismatical. A difference of opinion and practice had amicably prevailed, respecting *baptism administered by*

heretics ; when Stephanus, ambitious of imposing the traditions of Rome on all Christendom, broke the peace of the Catholic church, by presuming to excommunicate the Christians of Asia Minor, and of Africa, under the name of ‘Anabaptists ;’ * because they regarded baptism by heretics as invalid.

Voluntary separation may occur among professing Christians, to various degrees of extent, from the relinquishment of former church-communion, to the discontinuance of all fraternal and social intercourse. It may also be understood either of the *act* of separating, or of the mere condition or *state of being separate*, from a christian church or community. In consequence of separation, in the latter sense, the loudest and most vehement charges of schism which have disturbed the peace of the church, in recent times, have been brought by Protestants against their brethren : the offence being the maintenance of a communion distinct from that of sections of the christian church, with which they were never in actual denominational connexion. It must be obvious, however, to every candid mind, that the moral character of all voluntary separations can alone be determined by each particular case : and it should ever be borne in mind, that, though, in any instance, a separation be justifiable in itself, it

* Ἀναβαπτιστὰι. Dionys. ap. Euseb. vii. 6.

may become schismatical, by being attended with violence or uncharitableness.

That there are cases, in which voluntary withdrawal from communion is *not schism*, is allowed on all sides ; whatever differences of opinion may exist, as to the circumstances under which it is innocent.

The confined and anti-catholic notions respecting the relation of church-members to each other, and to their pastors, which were entertained, two centuries ago, by some who were more friendly than most others, to religious liberty in general, are now scarcely known. Moreover, the same letters of dismissal, or testimonials to christian character,* with which many churches are in the habit of furnishing those who, from necessity, or convenience, cease to communicate with them, are often granted, without hesitation, even to individuals who may deem it their duty to join another denomination of Christians. Surely this is the true expression of an enlarged charity ! Surely, here, is a recognition of the grand idea of *catholic unity*, perfectly harmonious with the genius of the gospel ! Here is no frightful charge of SCHISM ! On the contrary, all mere names and parties are forgotten, as they ought ever to be, in comparison with the great truths in which Chris-

* Anciently called *literæ formatæ*, or *epistolæ communicatoriæ*.

tians agree, and the sublime fact that they are all ONE IN CHRIST.

Even where the tenet of divine right, or of human authority in the church, interferes with the manifestation of so catholic a spirit, it is still allowed that cases may arise, in which it may be incumbent on a Christian to separate from a particular church. The author of 'A Treatise on the Church of Christ,'* thus writes: 'If any church of Christ should be guilty of a rejection of what God has plainly revealed, or a manifest contradiction and disobedience to his commandment, and obstinately persist in them, it would be *apostate*, and cease *ipso facto* to be a church of Christ. Separation from such a society is as much a duty as separation from heathenism and idolatry.'

That the conduct here described, would justify separation, cannot be doubted, and this—independently, it is conceived, of the question whether a church be so far *apostate*, as to have ceased to be a church of Christ? Decided apostasy, indeed, in a church, would, beyond dispute, be, in itself, a sufficient ground of separation. But, apart from all inquiry respecting the claim of a society, or denomination, to be a 'true church'—*separation is a duty, and therefore is not schismatical, if anything be imposed as a term of communion, to comply with which, is against conscience.* Chillingworth remarks, that 'imposing upon men, under

* By the Rev. W. Palmer. vol. i. p. 64.

pain of excommunication, a necessity of professing known errors, and practising known corruptions, is a sufficient and necessary cause of separation; and this is the cause which Protestants allege to justify their separation from the church of *Rome*.¹ This champion of Protestantism, in like manner, answers the charge against ‘Luther and his sectaries,’ that they were ‘damnable Schismatics:’ ‘Neither is it always of necessity schismatical, to separate from the external Communion of a Church, though wanting nothing necessary. For if this Church, supposed to want nothing necessary, require me to profess against my Conscience, that I believe some Error, though never so small and innocent, which I do not believe, and will not allow me her Communion but upon this condition: In this case the Church, for requiring this Condition, is Schismatical, and not I for separating from the Church.’²

The same celebrated writer thus defends the right of *private judgment*, the stronghold of the Reformation. ‘Every man is to judge and choose his Religion and his Church; and the rule whereby he is to guide his Choice, if he be already a Christian, is Scripture, which we say is the rule to judge controversies by. But that there is any Man, or any Company of Men, appointed to be the judge for all men, that we deny; and that, I be-

¹ Chillingworth’s Works, 1727. p. 194.

² Ibid. Preface to the Author of Charity Maintain’d.

lieve, you will never prove.' . . . ' This we know : that none is fit to pronounce for all the World, a judicial, definitive, obliging Sentence in Controversies of Religion, but only such a Man, or such a Society of Men, as is authorized thereto by God. And besides, we are able to demonstrate, that it hath not been the pleasure of God to give to any Man, or Society of Men, any such Authority. And therefore, though we wish heartily that all Controversies were ended, as we do that all sin were abolisht, yet we have little hope of the one, or the other, till the World be ended. And in the meanwhile, think it best to content ourselves with, and to persuade others unto, an *Unity of Character*, and *mutual Toleration* ; seeing God hath authorized no man to force all Men to *Unity of Opinion*.*

To the question of the Romanist, ' How can *they* be excused from Schism, who forsook the Roman Communion upon pretence of Errours which were not damnable?' ' I answer,' says Chillingworth, ' All that we forsake in you, is the Belief, and Practice, and Profession of your Errours. Hereupon you cast us out of your Communion. And then with a strange and contradictory and ridiculous Hypocrisie, complain that we forsake it. As if a Man should thrust his friend out of doors, and then be offended at his departure. But for us not to forsake the Belief of your

* Ibid. pp. 41. 60.

Errours, having discovered them to be Errours, was impossible ; and therefore to do so, could not be damnable, believing them to be Errours. . . . Schism there cannot be, in leaving your Communion, unless we were oblig'd to continue in it. Man cannot be obliged by Man, but to what either formally or virtually he is obliged by God ; for all just Power is from God. . . If you require the Belief of any Errour among the Conditions of your Communion, our Obligation to communicate with you ceaseth, and so the Imputation of Schism to us vanisheth into nothing, but lies heavy upon you for making our separation from you just and necessary, by requiring unnecessary and unlawful conditions of your communion.'¹

'Schism,' says the witty Vincent Alsop, 'is an ecclesiastical culverine, which being overcharged, and ill managed, recoils and hurts the cano-neer. He that undertakes to play this great gun had need to be very careful, and sponge it well, lest it fire at home.'² The charge of 'Schism,' which the Romish church has always so loudly thundered against Protestants, undoubtedly falls with the greatest possible weight on herself: for in proportion to the vastness of her dominion, have been her crimes against charity. What part of Christendom is there, which has not borne witness to her unjust excommunications and anathemas ?

¹ Ibid. p. 11.

² Melius Inquirend. p. 209.

Where has she not, by her tyranny over conscience, been guilty of the most awful and unnatural form of schism? Where have not her strivings for the mastery, been traced in the ashes of those fires which she has kindled; or in the blood she has occasioned to be shed by the more exterminating sword!

But *Iliacos intra muros peccatur et extra*: Protestants, not as yet conclusively delivered from all remains of the lingering fever of spiritual ambition—caught from Rome; and still indulging in distempered dreams of right, divine or human—to prescribe what men are to believe—to force their consciences—and to decree the mode in which they shall worship the Creator:—have, if possible, still more unnaturally persecuted each other, as schismatics! Yes—shame on you—ye children of the Reformation: ye, whose secession from Rome, can be defended from the charge of treason against the government of Christ, only on the principle that conscience, guided by scripture, is the final umpire in religion—that ‘to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean’—and that ‘whatsoever is not of faith is sin’:^{*}—ye, too,

^{*} ‘We assert that the action, concerning which we doubt, whatever it may be in itself, or to another, would, in *us*, whilst this doubt remains upon our minds, be certainly sinful. The case is expressly so adjudged by St. Paul, with whose authority we will for the present rest content.’ Paley’s Moral Philosophy, book i. chap. vii.

through the unholy ambition of ruling over each others consciences, and for the sake of uniformity—that empty shadow of unity, have persecuted each other, unto ‘bonds and imprisonment’—nay—even unto death!

How wide has been the departure from the true scripture-idea of schism—is sufficiently exemplified, in the fact: that it is regarded with horror, and is pronounced to be a dreadful sin, chiefly by those, whose communion is *forsaken* for another. The bare separation itself; or even the mere circumstance of being connected with a denomination which has *once* separated, has often been enough to provoke the charge of schism. On the contrary, though the conduct of those who have *left* a christian society, may have been really schismatical, while they were in it, little is apt to be thought of the past, by the community with which the separatists now unite.—So different is the medium of vision, to those who lose, and to those who receive, adherents to their opinions! Would Christians return to the inspired sense of the word schism, and allow their minds to be thoroughly imbued with the apostolical idea of this evil, as the indulgence of a contentious, unbrotherly, proud, domineering, calumnious, uncharitable spirit in religion, there would be more hope of mutual justice, and of the restoration of unity.

But it will be said—call voluntary separation from the church of Christ, by what name you please—it is still *sinful*. Granted:—this no Christian can deny.—But, by separating from *our* church, you separate from *the only true church*; or at least from that church, which, alone, is a true church *in this country*—being ‘determined by lawful authority!’ You set up a ‘rival communion;’ or at least you perpetuate the separation of your forefathers, and thus continue in their sin. However sincere you may be, in thinking it your duty to separate from us, you err in not submitting to the only divine form of the church; or to that authority which has a right to decide and determine—what creeds, articles, laws, rites, and ceremonies, and what constitution of the church of Christ, are, or are not, ‘repugnant to the word of God.’ You are guilty of a breach of order: you cannot, therefore, complain, with propriety, of being shunned and avoided, as, (to say the least,) a backslider, who must repent, and forsake his sin, before he is restored to brotherly intercourse, and confidence: for the apostle Paul exhorted: ‘Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.’*

Now, wherever such language as the above, is held between Christians, it is obvious that the

* Rom. xvi. 17.

party charging the other with sin, *merely in consequence of separation*, however peaceably it may be made or maintained, proceeds, either on the principle of *divine right* for the particular form of government, conformity to which, is required ; or (which amounts practically to the same,) on the principle of a *human authority* which morally ‘binds men to obedience.’

The condition proposed by Stillingfleet * with respect to the exercise of this authority :—that the ‘wisdom of the magistrate and church,’ is to be ‘regulated by the word of God,’ is of little service to those who are not regarded as at liberty, in the affairs of religion and conscience, to form their *own* judgment, as to what *is*, and what is *not*, consistent with the divine will. To say that the things commanded are ‘*indifferent*,’ is no valid plea for insisting on them : for who is to judge as to their *indifference*, if not he who is required to yield to them ?—not to add, that a purely conscientious objection may be entertained by some, to the very *principle* of such an enjoinder of things indifferent, as shall render *essential* to unity, what Christ has not made so. That He has delegated, either to ministers, or to private Christians, any such power to command the consciences of their brethren,—no proof, we may ven-

* Irenicum, 1661. p. 383. 416. See also page 174 above.

ture to say, has ever been adduced. Much less, have civil rulers this authority. Since the apostolic injunctions to ‘obey magistrates,’¹—to ‘honor the king,’²—to ‘be subject unto the higher powers’³—applied, in the first instance, to Christians who were under heathen governors,—these precepts must have referred to the general duty of civil obedience : nor is there any precept, or precedent, in the New Testament, which gives countenance to the supremacy of the magistrate in the church. On the contrary, there are many passages, which concur to represent the church of Christ as wholly a *spiritual* institution.⁴ Surely, therefore, nothing is more unreasonable, than to charge peaceable men with criminality, for the *mere fact* of voluntary separation from some human form of the church—a charge which comes with a peculiarly ill grace from any who have separated from Rome.

‘I remember,’ says Baxter, to Stillingfleet, ‘your Irenicum learnedly maintaineth that God hath instituted no one form of church-government as necessary. And if so, then not a national church form. And is it not a complete church, if it be without a form, which not God, but man, is the author of? Then God made or instituted no such thing as a complete church. Then is it a

¹ Tit. iii. 1.

² 1 Pet. ii. 17.

³ Rom. xiii. 1.

⁴ See Part i. ch. vii. ch. viii ; Section vi.

human creation? Then why may not man make yet many forms, and multiply and make, and unmake, as he seeth cause; and several countries have several forms? And *forma dat nomen et esse*. And if God made not any complete church, we should be acquainted who they be that had power to make a first church form; and who hath the power ever since; and how it is proved, and how it cometh to be any great matter to separate from a church form which God never made; and whether human church forms be not essential and constitutive causes of the churches. Whether every commanded oath, subscription, declaration, office, or ceremony, be an essential part of this church form. Whether there be as many church forms and species, as there be orders, liturgies, and ceremonies. And whether all these differences in the same kingdom, constitute so many schisms and separations.' ¹ 'An unanswerable reply,' remarks the judicious biographer of Baxter, 'to all who give up the *jus divinum*, and yet found a charge of schism or separation, on those who dissent from them.'²—And unanswerable it truly is, if we may judge from the absence of all evidence that Christ has given power to man to frame new

¹ Baxter's Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's 'Mischief of Separation.' 1680.

² Orme's Life of Baxter, 1830. vol. ii. p. 274.

terms of union and communion—terms confessedly not prescribed in the New Testament.

The apostolical exhortation to avoid those who ‘cause divisions’—is sometimes brought forward as a plea for rejecting all christian intercourse with those who do not belong to a particular communion, however conscientiously they may prefer another; but the ‘divisions,’ or factions,¹ here alluded to, were probably those which were caused by the Judaizing teachers; who sought to render essential those Jewish rites, which the apostle treated as things indifferent.²

But it may be urged that, while the language of scripture respecting ‘divisions,’ or ‘walking disorderly,’³ may not be indiscriminately applicable to all separation:—though it be granted, that no mere human authority, in the absence of a divine warrant, can bind men’s consciences,⁴ in matters

¹ διχοστασίαι. Rom. xvi. 17.

² See page 60—74. ³ See page 283.

⁴ What is said by Christ, respecting *binding* and *loosing*, *remitting* and *retaining*, (Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18; John xx. 23.) seems properly understood to mean, that acts of moral discipline, in a christian society, which are conducted in the true spirit of the gospel, so as to be faithfully *declaratory* of its laws and provisions, are approved by Christ. Any other interpretation, either limits the application of these passages to the apostles, or leads at once to Romanism.

which lie wholly between themselves and God—matters which do not interfere with the peace and welfare of society, or with the ‘things which are Cæsar’s,’ in distinction from the ‘things which are God’s:’—and though no body of Christians who are imbued with the apostolic spirit, would desire to ‘decree rites and ceremonies’ for *others* against their will:—yet it may still be argued, that all persuasives to concession, and to christian union with the party in question, are imperatively overruled, by the *divine right* which attaches to the form and order of the church, by the appointment of Christ himself.

That voluntary neglect of an express divine command, prescribing the one sole external model and ceremonial of the church, would justify the charge of guilt, every Christian will admit. Nor can it be denied that separation from a community so constituted, and union with another, whether such separation be properly termed *schism* or not, would be a sin of great magnitude. In the First Part of the present essay, it has been endeavoured to deduce from scripture, and from the light which is thrown on it by early Ecclesiastical History, the principle—that *no one form of government ought to be insisted on, to the extent of making it essential to the visible unity of the church of Christ.** If this principle be just, se-

* Part i. chap. viii. sections iii. iv. v.

paration from any one form, *as such*, is not necessarily sinful.

It was thought important, however, to view this question with especial reference to Episcopacy, as existing in our own country. For though, as Stillingfleet has plainly shown, this form of the Protestant church was settled in England, during several reigns—not on the principle of divine right, but on that of a power existing in human authority, to choose among different forms, at discretion, no one particular form being necessary : *—yet Episcopacy, in the sense of an official superiority of one class of ministers over the rest—a class possessed of peculiar powers—is declared by many to be a divine appointment, binding on the whole church of Christ, and *essential* to its genuine character : so that persons not episcopally ordained, are no ministers of Christ ; and societies of professed Christians, not governed by bishops, are no churches of Christ. It follows that these societies, and their ministers, are to be avoided, as disorderly, schismatical, and disobedient to the revealed will of God, in their separation from the true, apostolic, episcopal church.

The view to which the evidence on this question, appeared to lead, is that of Jerome, in the fourth century : that bishops and presbyters were

* Irenicum, part ii. chap. viii. See also pages 95, 96, above.

originally the same; and that the official superiority of the former, became a 'custom,' in the church; but was not an 'institution of the Lord.'* Controversy, however, was not the object of the present work, and anything even bearing the *semblance* of it, was contemplated by the writer with regret. Still, in order to ascertain whether separation from the episcopal mode were, in itself, sinful, it appeared absolutely necessary to dwell particularly on the *exclusive* claim of Episcopacy; especially as Episcopalians are, now, the only British Protestants, so far as we are aware, who are found formally maintaining that those who differ from them in church-government are 'schismatics.' For though Presbyterians see, in *their own* form, that brotherly equality of ministers, which they regard as the image of the apostolic church, while, as yet, '*presbyters*' and '*bishops*' were but different names for the same office; and Congregationalists hold sacred, what *they* deem the rights and discipline of the Christian assembly, according to apostolic precept and example: yet no Christians belonging to either of these communities, or to those of the Wesleyans, or the Friends, discover a disposition to pronounce other Christian bodies, differing from them in church-government, 'schismatics,' and 'cut off from the church of Christ.' The charge of '*schism*,'

* Hieronym. Comment. in Titum, cap. i.

is not heard to sound, either from the Kirk, or the Secession—from the Union, or the Conference, or the Yearly Meeting—or even from the Synod of the Episcopal Moravians:—it proceeds from the Established Episcopal Church, alone.

So far as *any one form* of the church is thus made absolutely *essential*, it is evident that a strong bar exists to unity, and fraternal love. All voluntary separation will still be pronounced schismatical. How different the conduct of St. Paul, with regard to all the questions which occurred in the apostolic age, relating to externals! Diversities of opinion and of practice, existed as to several points. Of prejudice and narrowness of mind, there were many examples. But mutual forbearance was appointed to be the conservator of charity. Grant that some were ‘weak in faith;’—that they were erring, though sincere Christians: yet there was to be no compulsion—no imposition of the customs of one, on another. No one was allowed to judge his brother, and to charge him with being ‘disorderly’ and sinful, for not uniting with him in certain peculiarities of outward observance, which, however clear to himself, might appear doubtful to his brother: but all were to treat each other with that charity which ‘*THINK-ETH NO EVIL.*’* If St. Paul countenanced Jewish devotional rites, in which Gentile Christians were

* See Rom. xiv. xv. 1—7.

excused from uniting, the *principle* that cases of voluntary separation in worship, may occur without sin on either side, and therefore without schism,—would seem to be established. Possibly similar forbearance may still have to be exercised, between the ‘fulness of the Gentiles,’ and the ‘remnant of Israel.’ Experience has unquestionably shown, that where there are no such deeply-rooted causes of difference in opinion, as in the case of Jews and Gentiles, a certain degree of separation in religious acts, may, through the infirmity (perhaps incurable) of human nature, be the best choice among evils. It is, without doubt, greatly preferable to the violation, even of a ‘weak’ conscience: but the charity of the gospel, would always dictate that separation should be carried to the least possible extent.

Finally: we may infer that DIVERSITY OF PRACTICE, AMONG CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, WITH REGARD TO MODES OF GOVERNMENT AND WORSHIP, IS NOT NECESSARILY CONNECTED WITH SCHISM: and, therefore that THE EXISTENCE OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANS, HOWEVER UNDESIRABLE IT BE, DOES NOT, OF NECESSITY, INVOLVE THE SAME EVIL. It is certain that the New Testament makes no provision for any such external uniformity, as ecclesiastical power has rendered essential to unity. Ages of progressive degeneracy elapsed, before the Christian church so far resembled those

who were ‘in bondage under the elements of the world’¹—as to give up its freedom, and submit to human impositions, in points either indifferent or doubtful. Hence the resistance and rebuke, which were called forth by the dictatorial conduct of Victor, and of Stephanus, before described.²

Yet compliance with the prejudices of others, when it did not include participation in what was judged to be morally wrong, or questionable, was obviously the part of charity. To this effect, Augustine, speaking of the difference of rites, remarks that, in such cases, ‘there is nothing more becoming a dignified and prudent Christian, than to conform to the practice of that particular church which he may happen to visit.’³ That this principle has not always been carried out by Christians, as it might have been, there is too much reason to admit. Still, it should be remembered, that even excessive scrupulousness in *some*, is no excuse for the assumption of spiritual power by others. Our brother may err, in laying too great stress on minor points, either through ignorance, weakness of faith, or even a somewhat uncharitable tenacity, and love of independence: but *we* may err far *more*, and may be said to lay still greater stress on these very points, by demanding conformity with our own practice, as the price of

¹ Gal. iv. 3.

² See Pages 274. 275.

³ August. Epist. 118 ad Januar. cap. 2.

unity. Our brother's fault may be a 'weak conscience':—ours would be presumption. The measure of another's obligation, is not the measure of *our* right to enforce its fulfilment. There are innumerable cases, in which all we can, or *ought* to do, is, to state our views with fraternal affection or persuasion; and then—only to remember, that 'to his own master he standeth or falleth.'

The fact must be admitted, that great degeneracy had taken place, in the orthodox church, before any sectional distinctions, other than local, were known. Much less were there any religious parties, having interests different from those of the entire body. Every believer was regarded as a member of the church universal; and every minister was recognised as the instructor of all who could understand the language in which he preached. The heartless bigotry, or the cold ecclesiastical uncharitableness, which on the lofty pretence of order, would deny to a blameless and accredited minister of Christ, the name of 'brother,' and the public functions of a 'fellow-servant' in the gospel, was unknown. Diversities of *rite* and *custom*, being matter of liberty, were, as we have seen, no bar to unity:¹ and the same may be said in reference to *church-government*,² in the most primitive times.

Even those who assign the earliest date to the

¹ See page 80—85.

² See page 128, note 1.

prevalence of Episcopacy, may be found admitting that there was a difference of practice, in regard to church-polity, during the first century at least, and probably till beyond the middle of the second. At a time, for example, when we have every reason to believe that, at Corinth, the distinction between bishops and presbyters, had not as yet been introduced—at Antioch, and in Asia Minor, according to the epistles ascribed to Ignatius, the former were obviously of superior rank, in Christian assemblies, to the latter. The evidence clearly is, that, as is testified by Jerome, the most learned Christian of his time, and the most learned of the Latin Fathers : ‘ among the ancients, presbyters and bishops were entirely the same ; but by little and little,* the whole charge devolved on one.’

Notwithstanding any such diversities as the above, it does not appear that they were the occasion of formal distinctions of communion, like those of our modern *denominations* ; which take their name from some peculiarity not essentially connected with the doctrine, or the morals of Christianity. For it is evident that so long as an enlarged charity prevailed, as to all things doubtful, or indifferent, and the right of each assembly to regulate its own internal affairs continued to be acknowledged ; its relations with other churches, would naturally, and in the true evan-

* Paulatim. Hieronym. Comm. in Titum.

gelical spirit, be founded on ‘*the Truth*,’ (in which all were agreed,) rather than on any sameness of mere outward peculiarity.

We have no evidence, in those cases, in which, if anywhere, it was most likely to be found—those of the Corinthians, and of some of the seven churches in Asia—that even considerable *disorders* and *corruptions* in a Christian society, demanded a hasty withdrawment, on the part of the pure and faithful portion of its members. The admonitions given to the Corinthian church, and the awful threats and warnings uttered to those in Asia, amount to a call to purification, rather than separation. The reason may be, that, great as were the delinquencies of many who belonged to these churches, nothing was *imposed, as a term of union and communion*—nothing required, in any way, to be *done, or sanctioned*, personally, by any one, *as a member of the body*—which pained, or rendered uneasy, the conscience of a Christian, whose mind was mainly influenced by devotion, by the sincere love of truth, and by charity. The offences were the offences of individuals. So that to remain, even in churches so far fallen, did not necessarily involve sinful compliances or compromises, or participation ‘in other men’s sins’—so long as such continuance was attended with no neglect of all due faithful admonition and remonstrance, and endeavour to enforce just discipline ;

and while any reasonable prospect still existed, of those means availing to produce the desired effect—the restoration of the faith, the purity, and the order of the society. The only instance, in which no discretion appears to have been left to Christians with regard to separation from a church, is that of the great apostasy—the spiritual Babylon—when she had filled up the measure of her iniquities, being ‘drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus;’ so as to call forth from heaven that awful command: ‘Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.’¹

The first *separations*, from the primitive church, on the grand scale, of which we have any account, neither arose from disorders which might be remedied by discipline; nor in consequence of diversity in rites; nor through the changes which took place in church-government;—great as these changes were—from the associate bishops² of Ephesus and Philippi,³ in the apostolic age; and the leading pastor-bishop, or *primus inter pares*, of the second century, whose diocese was his con-

¹ Rev. xvii. 6. xviii. 4.

² Or, as literally rendered into Saxon, in our version, *overseers*. Acts xx. 28.

³ Philipp. i. 1.

gregation—to the hierarchs, and metropolitans of the third.

It would seem, we must allow, but an ill augury for *denominational distinctions*, that the *first* bodies of professed adherents to the religion of Christ, who bore any other name beside that of ‘Christians,’ were corrupters of the gospel. Such were the Gnostic and Ebionite heretics; who fatally marred the purity of the truth, by the false philosophy of the Gentiles; or by a mixture of the Jewish kabbalah, and extreme views of the efficacy of the Mosaic law, with deeply erroneous notions respecting the person of Christ. The subsequent extensive separations, or ‘schisms’ of the Novatians and the Donatists, however, were not attended with any departure from the christian doctrine; but related to the grand controversy respecting the manner of dealing with the ‘Lapsed,’ and to the question—what constitutes the idea of a true church?

The separation which took its name from Novatian, at Rome, most probably originated in the honest design of restoring the discipline of the church, which he regarded as decayed; and not, as his enemies alleged, in any oblique, unworthy views, towards ecclesiastical elevation. It is not unlikely that Novatian was much calumniated.*

* See Neander’s Kirchengeschichte.

On the other hand, however, it cannot be doubted, that he was disposed to carry his ideas on the subject of purity of communion, to an austere, uncharitable, and unscriptural excess. But though he was accused by some, of heresy, as well as of schism; it does not appear that he, or his followers, held any opinions that were contrary to the general faith of the gospel; or that, judging from their morals, the name *Cathari*, or Puritans, which the Novatians adopted, was not a perfectly sincere expression of their good wishes for the church. A living writer remarks, that, though they were ‘stigmatized both as schismatics and heretics, they may perhaps be more properly considered as the earliest body of ecclesiastical reformers. . . This endeavour to revive the spotless moral purity of the primitive faith, was found inconsistent with the corruptions even of that early age: it was regarded with suspicion by the leading prelates, as a vain and visionary scheme; and these rigid principles, which had characterized and sanctified the Church, in the first century, were abandoned to the profession of schismatic sectaries, in the third.’* Milner takes less favourable views of the Novatians; chiefly fixing his attention on the

* A History of the Church; by the Rev. G. Waddington, M.A. Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Prebendary of Chichester. 1833. p. 70.

circumstance, that ‘the unity of the church was now broken for the first time;’ and on the ‘irregular manner in which Novatian contrived to be elected bishop of Rome, in opposition to Cornelius;’ though the fact appears to have really been, that his election was contrary to his own will.¹ ‘Thus was formed,’ adds Milner, ‘the first body of Christians, who, in modern language, may be called *Dissenters*; that is, men who separate from the general church, not on the grounds of doctrine, but of discipline.’²

The Donatian Schism appears to have been more strongly marked, in its origin, by personal feelings; as it broke forth on occasion of a dispute, respecting the rights and privileges of the bishops of Numidia, which was mixed up with the Donatian views of discipline. Whatever may have been the errors of their opponents, the Donatists carried their sectarianism so far, as to reject all communion with the African churches, and with all others who did not do the same; declaring that their *own* community contained the only ‘true churches’ of Christ; that all the rites and ordinances of other Christians were null and void; and that none were to be received, but those who

¹ See the account of Novatian, in Neander’s Kirchengeschichte. Bd. i.

² Milner’s History, 1812. Vol. I. pp. 372. 373.

submitted to be re-baptized; and, if ministers, either to be re-ordained, or to relinquish the sacred function. The Donatists, in their quarrel with Cæcilianus, bishop of Carthage, appealed to the emperor Constantine:—thus exhibiting the first public example of the humiliating spectacle, of professing Christians calling the civil power into the church, to settle questions of discipline, which they themselves were unable, or unwilling, to determine by the laws of Christ! The consequences were—severe political measures, followed by armed resistance, and bloody tumults; which, though they were allayed by Constantine's adoption of a milder and wiser policy, in repealing certain laws which had been enacted against the Donatists,—led, in the reign of his successor Constans, to scenes of persecution and massacre, which did not cease during thirteen years. Such was one of the earliest instances of the mischievous effects which result from summoning human passions, and the secular power, into the field of religious controversy!

But much as the separations which have taken place among orthodox Christians, have, unhappily, been blended with strife and faction; it will scarcely be contended that a breach of charity must *necessarily* arise from their differences of opinion. If the all-wise Head of the Church has been pleased to leave many points, so treated of

in the New Testament, as that men may be genuine, and even intelligent Christians, and yet not view these points in the same light:—and if some may be sincere in adopting forms and modes, which others are equally sincere in declining:—then, considerable diversity of practice, in this respect, may surely consist, as in the case of the Jewish and Gentile converts, not only with fidelity to Christ, but also with charity to ‘the brethren.’ And if there be no schism in the diversity itself, there needs be none in the name which designates it; provided this name be not assumed in a party spirit.

Hence, *the existence of different denominations of Christians, is not necessarily schismatical.* That it is a mark of infirmity—of imperfect apprehension of truth;—that it is undesirable—is admitted. The millennial glory of the church may cause these lines of demarcation to melt away. That it will render them fainter and less numerous, cannot be doubted. Yet we maintain, that schism, in the sense of the New Testament, is, by no means, *of necessity*, involved in these distinctions. For, why—notwithstanding such differences of opinion—may there not still be ‘unity in essentials; in non-essentials liberty; in *all things* charity?’

When the imaginary spell of ‘infallibility’ was broken by the Reformers, there was no consistent course but for Christians to take the Scriptures

into their own hands, and, with devout minds, to judge for themselves. Chillingworth,¹ in treating of *tradition*, justly remarks, that ‘Unless the Scripture contain all necessary Divine Truths, it cannot be a perfect Rule of Faith.’ The author of ‘A Treatise on the Church of Christ,’² states with approbation, that ‘the Anglo-catholic doctrine of tradition, only admits it as confirmatory of the true meaning of Scripture.’ To this description of tradition, there can be no objection. The Romish doctrine is, that it is both an independent source of truth, and an infallible interpreter. Tradition, however, is, in strictness, nothing more nor less than *historical evidence*—to be received or rejected, in every case, according to its real weight. It is *human testimony*, which comes armed with no divine authority, but is open to the impartial examination of all.

If we regard the Reformation in its true light, it was the dethronement of tradition, and of human authority in general, from sovereignty over the church. It gave an appellate jurisdiction, in all matters of religion, to the court of conscience; against the decisions of which, if they be wrong, there remains but one sole and final appeal—an appeal to the tribunal of God. All that man can do, in the mean time, is, to endeavour, in the

¹ Works, 1727. p. 40.

² By the Rev. William Palmer. Vol. ii. p. 46.

spirit of christian love, to enlighten, to convince, to *persuade* his brother—supposed to be in error. If this method fail, the task is over—and provided the error be not essential, ‘charity covereth* all things.’ Until it be shown that modes, and forms, and church-order, are, in Scripture, put on a level with the great doctrines and precepts of the gospel, every one must, on these points, be left at liberty to follow his own course, without being supposed, for so doing, to have forfeited the affections of his fellow-Christians. If this liberty involve schism in one party, it must do so in another, and in all. Every denomination must be guilty of as many schisms, as there are denominations beside itself: and the whole Protestant church is one mass of schisms. This can be denied, only on the principle of a clear, divine prescription; or a divinely delegated authority. To separate from a church *so* sanctioned, would doubtless be nothing short of rebellion against Christ. But where is this prescription?—where are the credentials of this authority?

The divine Redeemer loved ‘his own.’ There was a divine love, which embraced all his disciples, equally:—a love, which neither Gethsemane, nor the cross, nor death, could quench. But, having condescended to assume our nature, as a man he obeyed its laws. There was a *human*

* στέγει. 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

love—the preference of friendship ; ‘ Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.’ There was ‘ a disciple whom he loved,’ and who ‘ leaned on his breast at supper.’ Thus, he sanctioned private friendship, as consistent with universal love. May not *denominational Christianity*, maintained with charity, be regarded as a certain species of christian friendship ? Friendship is founded on something more than even grand common principles : it involves a somewhat minute peculiarity of tastes—similar characteristic predilections and objects of pursuit. Let christian denominations, therefore, be conceived of under the idea of societies of private friendship, selected from the universal church, and founded on coincidence in minor opinions and practices, chiefly regarding external points.

Now since but few, comparatively, can meet for public worship under the same roof, there must, of necessity, be different places of assembly. May not Christians, then, avail themselves of this unavoidable separation, and associate together, according to similarity of sentiments and views :—still preserving unity of spirit ; union of effort in doing good ; and, to the utmost limit allowed by conscience, occasional interchange and union, in worship and communion ? Christians *must* worship locally *apart* :—why may they not *so* worship, as that the consciences of all may be

satisfied—that all may ‘be fully persuaded in their own minds’—that all may be ‘edified?’ Let all enjoy this privilege of predilection and selection—yet let all be *one*. Let their union, in all other respects, be as great as possible—unity of heart being entire. On what just principles can any one, here, discern *schism*?

Yet how beautiful, some will say, is ecclesiastical uniformity! Though all cannot meet in the same place, why cannot all (at least in the same nation) be conformed to one and the same model? Uniformity, we reply, beautiful as it may be when it is the natural expression of unbiassed unity of conviction, can never be beautiful when forced. On the other hand, provided jealousies and animosities be absent, and unity of heart be preserved, even *variety* in modes and forms may furnish latitude to Christians for manifesting the strength of those principles in which all are united; and may illustrate the power of that charity which does not require a party dress, but is the universal genius of Christianity. Though it must be admitted that variety of opinion, on any points involving the alternative of truth and error, implies the existence, somewhere, of dim and misty perceptions: yet for these, there appears no immediate remedy. Therefore, it only remains for Christians who are one in essentials, to agree, in other respects to differ.

If, among those who are equally faithful and sincere, some are able to trace the obscurer forms of truth more minutely than others;—either from possessing a mind more acute or laborious, or from having greater opportunity of examination, or being more free from the cleaving infirmity of prejudice:—yet are there not certain great truths plain to all?—truths so vast and impressive, that, like the nearer mountains in the Alpine landscape, they obtrude themselves on every eye, and cannot but fill the greater part of the sphere of vision? Though, to the landsman, the horizon is a blank, when the sailor can perceive a distant sail—yet do not *all* recognise the omnipresence of the ocean and the sky? And cannot he who discerns not, with his unaided vision, the asteroids, or the satellites of the planet Jupiter,—feel an elevation of soul, when he beholds the glories of the starry firmament, and the astronomy of the universe? Surely the grand objects of our common faith are so broadly defined, and so momentous, that they may well be allowed to absorb the greater share of attention, in every christian mind! Yet how often do they appear to be lost sight of, and forgotten, in the mere external distinctions, and the uncharitable jealousies of party!

This is especially likely to be the case with those, who cannot see any *redeeming circumstances* in the existence of denominations among

Christians ; and whose desires would appear to fix more immediately on bringing the church at once to external uniformity—than on promoting real unity of heart, by making some sacrifices of private feeling, and party prejudice, at the shrine of charity. That there *are* such redeeming circumstances, however, must be evident to all minds which are not labouring under the illusion—that uniformity is essential to unity.

It is an apostolic injunction, that all things are to be ‘done decently and in order.’ If, therefore, Christians *must* differ, as to modes of worship and government ; and if they have no right from Christ to decide these points for each other ;—it becomes necessary that those who concur in believing certain practices to be most agreeable to the will of God, should be at liberty to adopt them, without imposing them on their fellow-Christians : for, since different rites and forms cannot co-exist, it is thus, alone, that order, and edification, and christian freedom, can be maintained.

If it be an evil that the churches of Christ are no longer distinguished by merely local names, as in the apostolic age ; and that instead of such phraseology as ‘the churches of Galatia,’ ‘the churches of Judea,’ ‘the churches of Macedonia,’—appellations are now used which mark differences of *opinion*—(and that this *is* an evil, we admit :) yet it is a far less evil, than the actual

existence of the very *same differences*, together with the compromise of conscience, or the perpetual conflict of ill-assorted sentiments, each striving for ascendancy in the christian assembly. That such a state of things would be entirely fatal to edification and to unity, is too evident to require illustration. On the contrary, we *know*, happily, from *fact*, that there *may* be the most cordial harmony—the most fraternal charity—the most genuine unity, between Christians of different denominations.

Before one body of Christians can be justly charged with being schismatical in relation to another, it must be shown that they have been guilty of a *breach of charity*, which, it should never be forgotten, *is schism*. But a breach of charity cannot consist in Christians peaceably declining to adopt the opinions of men fallible as themselves, against their solemn convictions—the result of devout examination of the word of God, and of any evidence of its meaning that is within their reach.

That mere denominational varieties, however undesirable in some respects, cannot with propriety be called schisms, we may safely conclude, not only from the scripture-account of the schisms at Corinth—but also from the nature of the unity of the church, in the first age—from the diversities of observance, which, in concession to human

infirmity, were permitted by apostolic authority, as not inconsistent with the bond of universal love, and which may be regarded as exemplifying the first tendency to separate worship—from the tenderness which was always manifested by the apostles, towards conscientious scruples and minor differences, even though they might arise from weakness of faith; more anxiety being ever shown by these inspired servants of Jesus, that different opinions on external points, might be held with mutual charity, than that uniformity should reign:—finally, from the fact, that, in the New Testament, the *spirit* in which the discipline, government, and worship of the church, are to be conducted, is strongly and repeatedly insisted on, while the mere *letter*—the formal details—are but incidentally, and slightly brought forward.

CHAPTER II.

CAUSES AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF SCHISM.

THE GENERAL SOURCES of schism lie as deep in the heart of man, as his corruption : and since even the best Christians are but imperfectly renewed, none are exempt from the danger of being brought under the influence of these causes. Man, as a frail and fallen creature, may be said to reverse the fable of Midas, whose touch turned everything into gold :—man changes the noblest objects with which he comes in contact, even the pure gold of truth itself, more or less, into *dross*. Self, and error, are continually obtruding themselves, even into his ‘ holy things ;’ and when they prevail, he needs no other guides to lead him into all uncharitableness.

Bacon perceived that the causes which had, up to his time, obstructed the progress of the sciences, were so interwoven with the infirmity of the human intellect, that they would be ever tending to

check its career, even after they had been clearly pointed out, and laid bare to observation:—and thus the long experience which the Christian church has had, of the operation of the causes, which, more than any others, have opposed the triumph of Christianity, has not yet proved a sufficient warning against these sources of mischief. For want of a more fervent and pervading charity, the church has passed through the greater part of two millenniums of comparative languor, feebleness, and slumber, ere she has roused herself, even to *prepare* for looking forward to the millennium of her glory—the millennium which is to be a reign of love.

The *self-will* of pride, and *error* in judgment, have been the chief general causes of schism. The former is clearly evil, and often gives its own complexion to the latter:—for how frequently does opinion follow inclination! how rarely, in things moral, is judgment allowed to operate free from bias! A fallible mortal, possessing influence in the church of Christ, has become enamoured of an *idea*; and has sometimes scarcely been aware that this idea has assumed no small portion of its importance, in his view, simply because it is *his own*. This idea must be carried out—other Christians must receive it:—but others are not able to see so much in it that is desirable—nay, they think the idea wrong. This idea may reveal

itself in the idolatry of some favourite, or in party-attachment, as at Corinth ; or it may be the idea of some rite or ceremony which all must adopt, with the Judaizing teacher, or with Victor of Rome ; or it may be the idea of general uniformity. Selfish motives, in a gross and palpable form, such as ambition, jealousy, or sordid self-interest, may ingraft themselves on the errors of the judgment ; or may be more gross and palpable still, by displaying themselves as the original cause and spring of the evil.

Thus, ample and lasting sources of schism, have been found, in false and mistaken and narrow-minded zeal—in the conceitedness of self-importance—the love of power —and the introduction of worldly principles into the church. Hence the confusion of non-essential with essential truths and errors—the adoption of party names—the magnifying of party distinctions, while grand common principles seem comparatively forgotten :—consequently, a party literature ; violent party controversies ; a party-training and education of the young ; and an adherence to party, so tenacious, as greatly to detach the mind from the sense of union with the universal church :—nor have pecuniary considerations failed to be connected with the rivalries, and jealousies of religious party.—But it will be necessary to descend more particu-

larly to the occasions of schism, and to its various illustrations.

As family quarrels are to be distinguished from factions in the state ; so schism may exist, either among individuals composing one fraternity of Christians ; or more generally in the church at large, and between its different compartments. In other words, schism may be viewed, both in its more *private*, and its more *public* relations.

SECTION I.

OCCASIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF MORE PRIVATE SCHISM.

LET us first view the schismatic *at home*, or in his more private capacity, as the member of a particular christian society. One uncharitable spirit may diffuse coldness, suspicion, and distrust, among many brethren, who are united in the closest spiritual relations. One ‘troubler in Israel,’ may cast the brand of strife into the sanctuary, and set the whole in a blaze. One bitter, factious spirit, under the name of ‘Christian’—received into a religious body, may prove the destroyer of its prosperity—as a viper stings to death the

bosom that cherished it.—Such mischief may be the ultimate issue of a selfishness, which prefers the gratification of its own self-will, and its own evil dispositions, to the welfare of the christian church.

Schism may take place in a body of Christians, in the form of A LEVELLING DEMOCRATICAL SPIRIT. Whatever be the constitution of a christian church, insubordination to lawful authority, lawfully exercised, cannot fail to be destructive of peace. The freedom of the church does not consist in a perfect equality of position, or a sameness of office and function, among all who compose it. In every well-regulated society, there must be certain distinctions: some must be superior—some subordinate. ‘Order is heaven’s first law;’ and on earth, the church is, of all places, that in which *disorder* is most unseemly. He, therefore, who is wilfully negligent of the proprieties of the relations he sustains, as the member of a christian society, may readily incur the guilt of schism. He is a *schismatic*, who, in the church to which he belongs, refuses duly to ‘obey them that have the rule,’ and ‘who watch for souls, as they that give account.’* On the plea of the equality of all in the sight of God, some would perhaps reduce the minister merely to the rank of a ‘speaking brother,’ with no more authority of

* Heb. xii. 17.

function, than a private Christian—or a chairman of a public meeting. Or a zeal ‘not according to knowledge,’ mingled with vanity and self-importance, may, in some communities, lead a man to hold private assemblies, without consulting his pastor; which may, through indiscretion, prove the germ of parties injurious to the unity and tranquillity of the body.

The spirit of insubordination may discover its schismatical tendency, by OPPOSITION TO CHURCH-DISCIPLINE. Nothing is more clear and definite in the word of God, than the delineation of character which is there given, of those who are his children, and who ought to form the communion of the church. That much discretion is often required, as to the *mode* in which discipline is to be carried into effect, will be admitted; but painful as is this part of the administration of Christianity, it is the stronghold of the church, against the irruptions of the world. Awful as is the sentence of *exclusion*, it is, unquestionably, the duty of every christian society, to have the means within itself, of separating between ‘the precious and the vile.’ He who, by his irreligious conduct and temper, discovers that he is not of the ‘fold,’ but that he has ‘crept in unawares;’ or who may have rendered it necessary for the church to exonerate itself from participation in his offences, must, by the christian law, be ‘put away.’

Just discipline, when scripturally and prudently enforced, cannot be resisted, even by relatives and friends, without resistance to the authority of Christ himself. In such cases, the purity and unity of the church must be maintained, as paramount to all human ties. Opposition, here, has sometimes been the cause of much variance and strife; while it has been forgotten, that as human justice recognises no partiality, so the laws of the spiritual kingdom ‘know no man after the flesh.’ Even an apostle has withstood an apostle, when ‘he was to be blamed.’*

A schismatical state of feeling may exist, through the WANT OF CHARITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT CLASSES OF SOCIETY IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH. The *poor* may act unbecomingly towards the rich, by not paying due ‘honor’ to those whom God has been pleased to place in a superior condition. Servants may ‘despise their masters, because they are brethren.’ The *rich*, on the other hand, may not ‘condescend to men of low estate;’ and may maintain too much distance and reserve, perhaps apparent haughtiness, towards their poorer fellow-members of the mystical body of Christ; not sufficiently remembering that Christ was poor; that these earthly distinctions must soon for ever cease; and that while the ‘brother of low degree’ is ‘exalted,’ as a Christian, to an equality of

* Gal. ii. 11.

privileges with the rich—the rich is exhorted to ‘rejoice in that he is made low.’—Can it be doubted that he, who, by demanding a respect to be paid, in the church, to his wealth or rank, which is not due to his piety, or his usefulness, wounds the feelings of his brethren—is acting schismatically?

Such a spirit may easily assume the form of a LOVE OF DOMINATION, another occasion of schism. He who, on any account, desires to exercise an undue influence over the will of his brethren, and thus to render them subservient to his wishes; or to silence those, who, by the usages of the particular society, may have an equal right with himself to express an opinion, is almost sure to create dissension. How many christian societies have been thrown into confusion by such men; who, like Diotrephes, ‘love in all things to have the pre-eminence;’ seeking to rule alike over the shepherd and the flock! Is not this the character of a schismatic?

Schism may also manifest itself, in PERSONAL OR FAMILY QUARRELS. Disputes in the church, have sometimes originated in some misunderstanding between two *individuals*; and, instead of a private adjustment being attempted, ‘between themselves alone,’ agreeably to the law of Christ,* others have, at once, been made parties to the

* Matt. xviii. 15.

quarrel; and the seeds of strife have been quickly multiplied. Or a jealousy of influence, may exist between *families*, each of which may desire to exercise too much control over the affairs of the christian assembly. Thus is produced a schism of rivalry, which has not unfrequently embroiled the church, and proved a source of lasting evil.

A LITIGIOUS SPIRIT among some of the members of a christian society, has also caused grievous disorders—‘brother going to law with brother, and not before the saints,’ in cases of disputed right—when, perhaps, the affair was of such a nature, that it might have been amicably settled by arbitration of the brethren; or by other known Christians. Though the apostle Paul’s remarks to the Corinthians, on lawsuits, had immediate reference to their situation among heathens, it is evident that the distinction which ought, as far as possible, to be maintained between the church and the world, renders his counsels still applicable, in spirit, to the whole church of Christ. ‘Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one who shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother; and that before the unbelievers?’ *

* 1 Cor. vi.

Again: BACKBITING AND SCANDAL, have proved fertile causes of schism. What evil has been produced among Christians, by this base love of idle-talking on the faults of others; and the proneness to be a ‘busybody in other men’s matters!’ This is the weakness of an empty mind; and the vice of a mean spirit. Such a disposition is totally unworthy the christian character. By not being ‘slow to *speak*’ what may have been *thought* respecting the character of others, reports have been originated and circulated, which have been as injurious as unjust. Small faults have been magnified. A talking, tale-bearing disposition, has been indulged, beneath the guise of affected surprise—regret—concern for religion—or even regard for the very character made free with:—perhaps under the mask of pretended disbelief of discreditable rumours—false, or exaggerated; and which might have died away in oblivion, had they not been thus industriously propagated. What lasting mischiefs have, in this way, been caused to christian societies! He who creates variance and broils, by a shameful propensity to disparage and degrade his brother’s character, is a genuine schismatic. His tongue is as a firebrand, and he may become the incendiary of a whole community. ‘Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defil-

eth the whole body ; and setteth on fire the course of nature ; and is set on fire of hell. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.’ *

There are schisms arising out of FALSE DOCTRINE, especially from Antinomianism. Few things have been more injurious to religion, than distorted views of the ‘ doctrines of grace.’ Other errors carry with them their own condemnation, by wearing the more unequivocal aspect of heresy : but speculative Antinomianism claims a more plausible relation to doctrinal truth. Its spirit, however, is pre-eminently uncharitable — cavilling — acrimonious — presumptuous ; and he who partakes of it, cannot fail of being schismatical. To a mind thus affected, all argument is ‘ carnal reasoning,’ and all search for truth, ‘ fleshly wisdom.’ If the pastor speak of *duty*, he is charged with ‘ putting works in the place of Christ :’ nor does he ‘ *preach the gospel*,’ unless he is always discoursing on the privileges of the people of God ; to whom the *high-flying schismatic* is scarcely willing to allow that any belong, who do not soar so high in doctrine as himself. All others are said to be ‘ legalists’ — ‘ Pharisees’ — ‘ in the dark’ — ‘ blind as a bat.’ We do not assert that ultra-Calvinists are always lax in practice — the contrary is undoubted : — for it is the redeeming mystery of some men’s minds, that they are incon-

* James iii. 5.

sistently better than their principles. But certain it is, that, in some christian communities, nothing has proved a more fruitful ‘root of bitterness’—a more energetic element of discord, than the spirit of a Calvinism, from which Calvin himself would have indignantly recoiled.

Many congregations have also suffered, more or less, from the schisms which have taken place through a WANT OF MUTUAL CONCESSION, IN REFERENCE TO THE APPOINTMENT OF MINISTERS. The evil in question has not been confined to any one denomination, or mode of government. Parish churches, and dissenting chapels, have been known, on these occasions, to be equally converted into scenes of strife and clamour, which few debating societies would tolerate; and which are more appropriate to the hustings of a contested election—the turbulent arena of party feeling, than to the christian church. A few schismatical spirits, each determined to have his own will, reckless of the general good—saying, with the Corinthians, ‘I am of Paul’—‘I am of Apollos’—may sow seeds of dissension, which may speedily grow up and overrun the garden of the Lord, where charity and harmony have flourished for generations. Contests have attended the filling of a vacant pulpit, which have produced distraction, division, and separation, without end. It would be unfair, however, to charge such disorders

on the *elective system*, existing as it does, partially, in the Establishment; and very extensively among Dissenters. These disorders often result from the *abuse* of a practice, the *principle* of which is clearly recognised by apostolic precedent;* and which seems perfectly accordant with the sober, dignified, and reflective character, which appropriately belongs to the *christian* assembly, as distinguished from the promiscuous masses, of which political electors are often composed.

But while the privileges of the christian fraternity may be perverted, like political freedom, to anarchy and confusion—it should not be forgotten that MINISTERIAL FAULTS AND DELINQUENCIES, may also be sources of schism. Imprudence in word or deed—the want of a nice tact, as to all the proprieties of his office and station—over-sensitiveness and warmth of temper—a proud, self-sufficient, dictatorial spirit, determined to carry every point—fondness for meddling with politics, where duty does not call—worldly-mindedness—the love of money—indolence—and immorality—are the more to be bewailed, and are the more criminal, in a minister, because found in one who is especially charged to be an ‘ensample to the flock.’ If, in any way, he fail of being so, he lays himself open to severe animadversion. But while some condemn

* See Acts vi. 3–5. Also Mosheim, Neander, and Waddington, pp. 158. 164. 165. 167. above.

him, others may attempt to screen or vindicate him. Thus parties may be formed; and strong personal feelings excited, leading to angry discussions: and he who ought to have been the peace-maker, and chief ornament of the society, may become the cause of its contentions, and the author of its disgrace.

Strange as it may seem, the case is by no means unknown, that a divided and party state of feeling has sometimes arisen in a congregation, in consequence of different doctrines being taught in the *same pulpit* by different ministers. One has ‘contended earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;’ while the other, has failed to preach what he has solemnly declared, before God, that he believes!—nay, he has perhaps treated some of the essential doctrines of the gospel, to which he has subscribed his ‘assent and consent,’—as ‘*fanaticism*,’ and those who faithfully preach them as ‘fanatics.’ In any variance, or separation, which may take place, on this account, in the church—it is easy to perceive where must lie the weight of the responsibility.

Unfaithfulness to the truth, moreover, has not unfrequently exhibited itself, in what may be termed a kind of *schism between the desk and the pulpit*. The doctrines read in the one, have been either tacitly or openly set aside, by those which have been advanced in the other; and the devout and

reverend spirit of ancient piety which breathes forth from the liturgy, has been lamentably neutralised in the sermon, by a ‘vain and delusive philosophy,* after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.’ Not only when ‘Paul has served a text,’ has ‘Epictetus, Plato, or Tully preached’:—the pagan morality of the *christian* teacher, has even been blended with elaborate argumentation *against* some of the leading truths which distinguish Christianity from mere natural religion; and with avowed hostility to those who are zealous in enforcing them.

But were we to attempt an enumeration of the various forms which the schismatical spirit may assume, and the causes which may originate or perpetuate schism, within a particular society, the task would be endless: since this evil spirit may trouble the house of God, in every part, and throughout the whole range of its services, and its functionaries, from the altar to the choir, and from the pulpit to the pew. In the latter, may be sometimes found the DISSATISFIED HEARER; who complains that the minister does not preach to his ‘experience;’ when perhaps his experience may be more in fault than the minister; or he fancies himself, in some way, neglected or slighted;—and instead of following the law of Christ respecting

* Διὰ τῆς φιλοσοφίας καὶ κενῆς ἀπάτης. Col. ii. 8.

the private explanation of offences, real or imaginary—he prefers at once to excite prejudice and disaffection against a blameless pastor. Such a man; or one of A RESTLESS, UNSETTLED SPIRIT; or of A MEDDLESOME TEMPER, which is ever sowing discord among brethren; or a man who is UNWILLING TO HEAR FAITHFUL PREACHING;—confers a benefit on a christian society by separating himself from it.

In a word—the schismatical spirit may arise from the indulgence of any of those unchristian dispositions, which tend to impair brotherly affection:—from pride and selfishness—from error in doctrine, or corruption of practice—from everything, in short, which is contrary to the ‘mind of Christ.’ No christian society is impregnable to its assaults—no individual Christian should fail to watch and pray, lest he come under its power.

SECTION II.

OCCASIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS OF MORE PUBLIC SCHISM.

SCHISM may not only destroy the fruits of charity in a particular society of Christians, but may also grievously desolate the church at large. The schismatic may be found *abroad*, as well as at home.

The contentions which occur in an individual congregation, often inflict a fatal blow on its prosperity, by the local odium which they bring on religion. But when more general and public breaches of charity arise between different churches and denominations, they are calculated to do injury on a wider scale; according to the degrees of their manifestation—from the coldness and repulsion of alienated hearts, to a state of the church (to its shame be it spoken!) almost analogous to that of civil war in a nation.

WHEN CHRISTIANS OF DIFFERENT COMMUNIONS REGARD EACH OTHER IN THE SPIRIT OF OPEN HOSTILITY, an example is exhibited of the most flagrant and lamentable kind of schism. For nothing, surely, can be more unnaturally antichristian, than that the church of Christ should be divided into parties, more resembling opposed armies, which are keeping up a desultory warfare against each other—than one great community, various in the modes and customs of life, but animated by one spirit, and one desire, for the common good. Yet such has, too often, been the attitude which different christian denominations have maintained towards each other—such the melancholy and degrading spectacle, which the church has exhibited to the world!—a spectacle which would be scarcely credible when actually seen, were it not, unhappily, so familiar:—for

who would expect to find the religion of love chiefly attracting the attention of the profane, by overt demonstrations of mutual hostility, on the part of its professors !

But there may be public schism, where there is no open war. All JEALOUSIES AND UNHOLY RIVALRIES BETWEEN CHRISTIAN SOCIETIES, are similar in their cause, though different in degree. Uncharitableness is the fertile source of all these evils. ‘The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy’*—a humiliating confession to the Christian, who knows what he ought to be, as an imitator of Christ ! Strange, indeed—were we not aware what human nature is—that brethren of the same family should ever view each others households as rival establishments !—strange that the carnal envy between Ephraim and Judah, should have its counterpart among Christians ; whose proper interests are wholly centred in the ‘ things which are eternal !’ Yet there may be an unhallowed, earthborn rivalry, even in reference to what is good—a ‘ provoking one another to good works,’ without a ‘ provoking to love :’—there may be a competition, even in works of benevolence, which is attended neither with humility nor charity.

More especially may jealousies occur, when one society happens to have owed its origin to an unfriendly separation from another ;—above all,

* Jam. iv. 5.

where separation may have taken place in consequence of some minute difference:—for jealousy loves to mar the closest intimacies, and to act as a principle of repulsion between objects which have been in the nearest contact. Hence the alienation and prejudice which have arisen from such a cause, have sometimes not even been buried in the graves of the generation with whom they originated.

The apostle of the Gentiles rejoiced that ‘*Christ was preached,*’ though it might be ‘of envy and strife:’—but the *jealous schismatic* is of a far other mind. To him, the prosperity of another christian society, may be the triumph of a rival; and may occasion little else than morbid feelings of suspicion and chagrin. He almost loses sight of Christ, and of the salvation of souls, unless they are, in some way, identified with himself and his party; and he thinks more of feuds which ought to be forgotten, than of the good which may have been educed out of former evil. Such are the strange distortions of character, avowedly christian, which may be produced by selfish uncharitableness! How marvellous the power and wisdom of God, who can carry on his great designs of mercy, amidst all the weaknesses, follies, and inconsistencies, of his professing people!

Unhappily for the honour of the gospel, *pecuniary interests* have also been found among the

sources of schismatical jealousy and strife between Christians. Such is the mixed state of things in the present world, that even *religion* cannot be supported without money. Hence the possibility of rival secular interests, between one minister and another; or between a pastor and his flock; or between different congregations; or different denominations. Nor is there any taunt which the worldly-minded infidel is more eager to fling at the church, than the remark, that one of the esoteric doctrines of the sanctuary, is, that ‘gain is godliness.’ However it may have occurred, certain it is, that the impression (be it right, or wrong,) is extensively cherished by men of the world, that much of the public strife which takes place, from time to time, on the subject of religion, is deeply inflamed by gross selfishness. When a minister of the gospel, whether taking the high ground of ‘apostolic succession,’ or content with more lowly claims—is found so far departing from the self-denying apostolic spirit, as to grasp after money, and to seem intent on accumulation—what wonder if the world should scoff at the spectacle, and compare him, who thus belies his profession, to that fallen angel, who was

‘The least erected spirit that fell
From Heaven; for e’en in Heaven, his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of Heaven’s pavement, trodden gold,
Than ought divine or holy else, enjoyed
In vision beatific.’

If worldly men find that their great idol has attractions so powerful for spirits that profess to be intent heaven-ward, and not to love 'the world,' nor the 'things that are in the world'—they will but rush with more headlong and exulting confidence to their idolatry: they will be at once confirmed in their conviction that money is the *chief good* of man; and in the suspicion which they are always ready to indulge—that where religion is not fanaticism, it is little more than 'close ambition,' or a trade. Though examples of ecclesiastical avarice and pride are not confined to one party; it should be remembered that any system which furnishes the greatest opportunity for the growth and luxuriance of these roots of bitterness in the vineyard of the Lord, exhibits the widest departure from the economy of the apostolic church.

Again: is there a follower of Christ who sees no excellence out of his own little circle of the church?—does his own sect and party appear to have attained perfection, while all other Christians are but 'babes in Christ'?—in this NARROW, BIGOTTED, SECTARIAN SPIRIT, we discern another trait of schism. For schism is a chameleon, which may assume various hues, when examined in the full light of the law of love; though under no changes it loses its native character. Uncharitableness is a 'beam' in the eye of the mind—

a cataract—a jaundice:—it distorts—darkens—discolors everything. The *denominational schismatic* may see little glory even in a martyr's crown, unless it has been worn by one of his own name; while great moral delinquencies are thought to be atoned for, by great usefulness to the party, as such; or even by great party zeal. A man's party is the multiplied image of himself; and complacency in it, is often nothing more than an act of self-admiration. On the other hand, the faults of the party are so much the faults of individuals—that the partisan is seldom more conscious of them, than of his own; and they are consequently oftener overlooked or forgotten, than amended. This sectarian spirit, would have rejoiced, a century ago, to have brought the catholic soul of Whitfield into the trammels of a sect; and to have monopolized the labours of that apostolic man—whispering, as it did, in his ear.—‘*We are the people of God—you must confine yourself to us!*’ The tendency of a spirit so unworthy of Christianity, is plainly to ‘give offence’: and if no contention result from its manifestation, the credit is due to the charity of others.

Closely allied to this narrow-minded exclusiveness, is the SPIRIT OF PARTY PROSELYTISM—another aspect of the schismatical temper. This was a remarkable characteristic of the Judaizing zealots; who desired to make converts, that they

might ‘*glory in their flesh.*’ It had been well if those whose sincerity is far less disputable, had never imitated this vain-glorious proselytism; which sacrificed charity to an external rite. This spirit has also ‘troubled’ the modern church, by engendering sectarian enmities and strife. It is true, there are occasions when it may be a Christian’s duty to state his opinions, and his reasons for them—even on minor points; and, possibly, in the presence of those who are known to differ:—and the more advanced all parties are, in charity, the less will be the danger, in such a case, of offence being either offered or received. But a restless desire to enlist the followers of Christ under *our* banner—to fix on them the badge of *our* party, is unworthy of our allegiance to Christ, as head of the universal church. It may also often involve the taking of an unfair advantage of one who ‘is weak,’ and who ought not to be ‘received to doubtful disputations.’

The apostle Paul became ‘all things to all men,’ and ‘servant to all,’ that he ‘might *gain* the more:’—but the *proselytist* seems chiefly anxious to add to his sect; and scarcely to consider those as ‘*gained*,’ who are not gained to *his* ranks. Hence the youthful convert has sometimes been beset by different parties, in a manner resembling an election-canvass—rather than dealt with, in the catholic spirit of the gospel: as though his sal-

vation depended on his ‘seeing it his duty to come among *us*.’ How decided, *then*, the evidence of his Christianity! How important—how desirable—that he should not hearken to ‘unauthorized teachers,’ but to ‘*the church*’—or that he should make up his mind to be proposed at ‘our church-meeting,’ for fellowship with *us*—or that he should ‘take up the cross,’ and submit to ‘*the ordinance*’ (of baptism by immersion)—or that he should attend ‘our class-meetings’—or join ‘our connexion.’ That this spirit of sectarian zeal greatly tends to produce schismatical uncharitableness, is but too evident. Even the *appearance* of proselytism to a party, is likely to bring into collision, feelings and interests which have little in common with the great objects of Christianity; and which too frequently manifest that they derive but little consecration from being so closely connected with it.

It is easy for zeal, untempered with charity, and animated by party spirit, to break forth into ANGRY PUBLIC CONTROVERSY, another decided form of schism. Not that controversy is, *in itself*, necessarily unchristian; since it may be conducted with charity:—and it has often proved exceedingly useful, serving to vindicate the truth, and to illustrate its power. Hence it has been well said, that while ‘the love of controversy is hateful, the fear of it is pusillanimous.’ But on the spirit in which

it is conducted between Christians, everything depends. When controversies are intemperate—wrathful—acrimonious—they are tempests in the church; which instead of overspreading the world, as with an atmosphere of peace, is rent with the thunder of angry passions, and betrays the violence of the elements which it cherishes within its bosom. Had controversy always appeared as *charity* contending for *truth*, it would have purified the church, without dividing it. But when fiery spirits take the lead in a war of words—when the pulpit and the press are transformed into polemical batteries, from which invectives are poured forth with all the heat of a political debate—the church of Christ becomes the scene of an unnatural conflict, in which truth is sacrificed to prejudice; a spiritual victory is sought by carnal weapons; reason is exchanged for railing; and the world mocks at the degradation which the church is inflicting on herself, and exclaims:

‘Can *heavenly* minds such high resentment show!’

Further: the controversial attitude which christian bodies sometimes assume towards each other, may readily lead to the schismatical error of TREATING CERTAIN DENOMINATIONAL PECULIARITIES WITH MARKED CONTEMPT. The allusion is not here to gross and palpable extravagances, as the dreams of the theosophists, or the ravings of

Jacob Behmen; nor to the impostures and delusions which have sometimes appeared under the name of religion. The holy vial at Hales—the Rod of Grace at Boxley—Darwin Gatherin—weeping images of Jesus—St. Andrew's finger, pawned for forty pounds—and similar absurdities—may justly be exposed. But even in these cases, the Christian should rather weep over follies which may have a disastrous influence on the eternal destinies of men, than be content with ridiculing them. Even the Romish ceremonies and errors, taken as a whole, are matter of remonstrance, rather than of contempt: for, wherever conscience, however erroneous, is concerned—contempt and ridicule are, at best, but dangerous weapons; and require to be used with extreme circumspection.

But where are charity and candour, when Protestants are found despising each others decent and conscientious practices—practices, maintained in sober judgment, and utterly beyond suspicion of hypocrisy and imposture? In such cases, all contemptuous jest and banter, is clearly a violation of the law of love. Of this spirit, however, there have been numerous exemplifications. Where is the charity of him, who, because he himself is attached to the practice of free prayer in the church, pronounces all forms to be '*superstition*'—'*will-worship*'—and '*formality*'? Or

what can justify the advocate of a liturgy, in speaking of all extempore devotion, as '*babbling*,'—'*canting*'—'*froth*'—'*mere noise*,'—and the like? Is it right for the pædo-baptist to pass his sarcastic jokes on the practice of '*dipping*,' which many wise and good men have believed to be the only scriptural mode of baptism? Or can the advocate of adult-immersion sneer at '*infant-sprinkling*,' and not commit an equal breach of charity? Is the earnest address of one class of preachers to be ridiculed as '*methodistical rant*,' and '*fanaticism*'? Or is the sober and chastened method of others, who preach the same truths, to be termed '*cold Pharisaism*,' and '*formal dullness*'? Is a minister of the gospel to be despised as an '*illiterate mechanic*,' because he has not been at a university? Or, on the other hand, is he who has received an academical education, necessarily a '*man-made preacher*'? Are not these mutual taunts, wherever they occur, the developments of an uncharitable, schismatical temper? and are they not eminently calculated to perpetuate alienation of heart, and strife, in the church at large?

We see a virulent exhibition of the schismatical spirit, in CENSORIOUSNESS. He who from behind the screen of an anonymous mask, stabs the reputation of his brethren, as an assassin,—or who, with a brow of brass, comes forward, like the

‘father of lies,’ to be their public accuser and slanderer—defaming their character—maligning their motives—bringing forth from oblivion, or perhaps even raking from the grave, their forgotten faults and falls :—such a man, be he minister or layman, is a schismatic of the most flagrant order—nay, is unworthy of the christian name.

Did not the history of human nature, and of the church, teach us the fact; we should be ready to ask—is it possible that, among the professed followers of Christ, there can be found those who are capable of betraying, towards Christians of another community, a malignity not to be distinguished from that of avowed scoffers and persecutors, excepting for its more *studied aim*? The only offence of those Christians, is their acting agreeably to the maxim of Chillingworth, already quoted, that ‘every man is to judge and choose his Religion and his Church; and the rule whereby he is to guide his choice, is Scripture.’ Are they, then, for this to be openly charged with ‘cloaking,’ under their religious peculiarities, ‘designs’ which they have never entertained—‘hypocrisies’ of which they are not conscious—and crimes which they have never committed?

The charity of that Dissenter would be little worth, who should not be able to conceive how a Churchman, influenced by a different education, and another order of associations—may sin-

cerely be of opinion that dissent is a 'great evil'; and may conscientiously, and apart from any sordid motives, believe that the government of a nation ought to make pecuniary provision for the ministers of a particular form of Christianity. It would be unjust for the Presbyterian, or the Independent, to identify Episcopacy, as such, with the spiritual despotism of the Romish church. It would be intolerable for any one to pronounce that he who holds sacred, Christmas-day, and Good-Friday, must be a superstitious and self-righteous Pharisee; or that no one can kneel at the altar of communion, without being an idolater of the sacramental elements. He who does not prefer a liturgy, would do little credit to his charity, by repeating against Protestants who use one, the charge, urged when all parties sought to rival each other in mutual invective and abuse, of superstitiously adhering to 'prayers shrivelled into the skeleton of a mass-book:—or, who should affirm that none can wear an ecclesiastical vestment, without giving a 'dangerous earnest of sliding back to Rome.'

That anti-Episcopalian, or Dissenter, would deserve to be noted as a bigot, and as pitifully ignorant of the history of the church of Christ, who did not freely admit, that men of unblemished piety, of self-denying uprightness, and of martyr-like spirit—have held with diocesan Episcopacy,

prescribed forms, and a union of the church with the state: that many Episcopalians have, with Bishop Hall, endured '*hard measure*' for their religion: since episcopacy has her list of sufferers for conscience' sake, as well as nonconformity. The candid Dissenter must acknowledge that a man may be a 'churchman,' without being a 'Vicar of Bray;' and that multitudes have given the strongest evidence of their sincerity, by preferring 'loss' to change of profession.

And if there be those who peaceably hold the contrary sentiments, with equal evidence of honest purpose;—who, without wishing to interfere with the religious freedom of *other* Christians, calmly and solemnly declare their *own* belief—that national religious establishments are a corruption of the church, and a check to the spiritual triumphs of the gospel—their conviction, that the system of free and voluntary contribution for the support of religion, is the only just and scriptural mode—that diocesan episcopacy, as subject to the alliance, control, and patronage of the state, is unfriendly to the genius of Christianity, the simplicity of the apostolic institute, the rights of the christian assembly, and the grand spiritual ends of religion:—must those who suppose these opinions to be important, and publicly express them, be branded as guilty of 'cant' and 'drivelling'—as '*hypocritically canting*,' 'my kingdom is not of

this world'? Is it just and Christian, to pronounce them '*upstart,*' '*proud,*' '*envious,*' '*engaged in an infernal alliance with Atheism, Infidelity, and all error*'; and in a '*hellish attempt to overthrow everything sacred*'?

Who is the true '*sectarian,*' but he who denounces all as sectaries, who are not of *his* sect? Who is the '*fanatic,*' if not he who sees fanaticism everywhere but in his own party spirit? Who is the '*enthusiast,*' but the man who makes a god of externals and non-essentials—while he finds '*enthusiasm*' in those only, who are in earnest respecting the grand objects of religion? Where is the '*schismatic,*' if not among those, who term everything schism, which does not accord with their own opinions—who are ready to reproach as '*pharisees,*' or '*hypocrites,*' those whose conscientious scruples they know not how to appreciate—or who would stigmatize as '*Anabaptists,*' a denomination who have nothing in common with the licentious insurgents of Munster, but their practice of adult-baptism by immersion?

Surely if the schismatic spirit exist at all, it may be found in false and censorious accusations between those who profess to be the followers of him in whose '*mouth there was no guile.*' Nor is schism, Protean as are the forms which it assumes, ever more hateful, than when it appears in the shape of calumny and slander—like a serpent hissing forth its venom, and darting its sting,

on all sides ; while its path is traced in the foul slime of the impurities which it has distilled. Strange—that the church of Christ, the region in which, if anywhere, some picture of the benevolence and innocence of paradise might be looked for, should sometimes be the nursery of the most malignant passions—that the enmity and malice of the first author of discord, should still be found in the garden of the Lord, and near to the tree of life !

It is by no means uncommon for schism to manifest itself in A CONDEMNATORY, PRESUMPTUOUS, ANATHEMATIZING SPIRIT. Striking examples of this temper, have frequently been exhibited by those who are imbued with the principles of ultra-Calvinism, or Antinomianism. The dissensions which have arisen from this source, in single christian societies, have already been noticed ; and the same anti-social views have also a disuniting tendency, in reference to the church of Christ in general. Those who talk largely of the ‘divine decrees,’ find few congregations whose ministers ‘are *thoroughly sound*’; for those who do not compound the cup of salvation with a predominant infusion of the doctrine of election, are ‘*not led into the truth.*’ They whose mental vision is not strong enough to see, through every obstacle, ‘*how all is settled from eternity,*’ are said to be ‘*in bondage,*’ and ‘*not enlightened.*’ Missionary enterprises have been condemned as ‘*taking the*

work out of the hands of God.' The souls of children have been neglected, on the plea that 'the Lord will *call them*, if he has decreed so to do.' It is in keeping with this unnatural perversion of christian truth, to regard the place of final retribution as the hall of Moloch, paved with the skulls of innocents; and to utter the frightful assertion that there are '*infants in hell*'! Those who have drunk deeply into this spirit, would seem to wish to monopolize mercy to themselves, instead of rejoicing in the salvation of others; and so strongly are they prejudiced against all views of religion which are not highly doctrinal, that were Christ to re-appear on earth as a stranger, and to preach another sermon like that on the mount, they would pronounce him an 'Arminian.' The spirit which is exhibited by those who hold these partial and distorted views of Christianity, is often eminently uncandid, and dogmatical; and tends strongly to repulsion, instead of union, among Christians.

Indeed the more any speculations, true or false, which form no part of the essential doctrine of salvation, are insisted on as important, the more numerous are the sources of schismatical division. *Millennarianism*, for example, revived as it has been in our day, has occasionally been brought forward as an article of faith. We have heard the denial of the doctrine of the 'personal

reign of Christ,' condemned as the rejection of a 'fundamental truth of Christianity'; and withholding belief in the return of miraculous gifts to the church, has been pronounced a sign of 'judicial hardness' of heart. The tendency to indulge, beyond the letter of Scripture, in positive declarations respecting what is to be believed, ill becomes fallible mortals; though no period of the church has been exempt from this evil. Even venerable antiquity, and the desire to guard the truth against heresy, will not consecrate any approach towards the confines of presumption.

On this account, many good men, though believing the received doctrine of the Trinity, have objected, not without reason, to the language of the Athanasian Creed; which goes far to prescribe the *manner* in which truths are to be conceived of, which the Spirit of inspiration has not been pleased to reveal but in general terms, adapted to their vastness, their sublimity, and their incomprehensible nature. Is it not a bold assertion, to affirm that 'He who will be saved, must *thus* think of the Trinity'; and that, otherwise, 'he shall without doubt perish everlastingly'? Does not this amount very nearly to making human forms objects of faith, equally with the word of God—placing human explanations of divine mysteries on a par with the mysteries themselves—and authoritatively defining the things 'into which the

angels desire to look' ?—These remarks are not made by way of forming an estimate of the creed itself; but in reference to its *damnatory* clauses, and its tendency to divide Christians who substantially agree.

The disposition to pronounce sentences of condemnation and anathema, increased with the growth of corruption in the church—till, at length, he came, who arrogated to himself power over the destinies of souls, in both worlds; and claimed the keys of heaven and hell. Thus the way was prepared for curses, interdicts, and excommunications without end. As Athaliah, the greatest traitor to the religion and laws of Judah, was loudest in crying 'treason !'—so the arch-schismatic and heretic of the church, made the limits of the Roman earth to resound with his anathemas against heresy and schism. And happy had it been for the interests of Christianity, and of mankind, if the spirit of presumption had never infected the churches of the Reformation :—if Protestants had not also forgotten the command of their Lord: ' Judge not, that ye be not judged; ' and had never severely condemned each other, on inadequate, or even frivolous grounds; or arraigned as guilty of rebellion against Christ, those whose chief desire was to render a devoted obedience to his will !

There are few religious denominations, in which there has not existed more or less of this spirit of

uncharitable condemnation ; and the unhappy result has often been, that the sweeping denunciations pronounced by a few, have been taken as an expression of the sentiments of the many—till whole christian communities have come to regard each other with alienated minds. In our own country, this spirit has, at one period, vented itself in maledictions against the ‘damnable doctrine of prelatry,’ uttered by the Presbyterian ; who saw Episcopacy opposed to the ‘right divine’ of his own church, and rivalling her in the race for political ascendancy, and state-patronage. At another time, the Episcopalian has declared that all who dissent from his church, ‘have guilt lying upon them. They are notoriously peccant. They are carnal, evil, deceitful workers, disorderly walkers, whom God will, undoubtedly, for these things bring into judgment ; and the faithful, far from being permitted to enter into any pastoral relation to them, are not permitted to have any christian communion with them ; no, not so much as any intimate, unnecessary acquaintance and familiarity with them in common life.’*

From the tone which has thus been assumed by professing Christians towards their differing brethren, it might be supposed that modes and forms are as clearly laid down in scripture, as the way

* White’s Letters to a Dissenting Gentleman, quoted in Towgood’s Letters, Eighth Edition, p. 3.

of salvation itself; and that some were entitled, with the Bible in their hands, to say to all the rest: Though we admit that you, or your forefathers, have suffered various pains, penalties, and privations, on account of your religious opinions—that, for this cause, you have been aliens in your native land, with an imperfect political existence; and, in consequence of your profession, have often lost your share in the honors and emoluments which your country has had to bestow:—yet, with all your pretensions to sincerity, the very fact of your being in a state of separation from our church, convicts you of fatal error; and renders your salvation exceedingly doubtful, if not utterly hopeless: for the scriptures not only declare that there is ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism’—but also *one precise model of church-polity*:—they not only solemnly announce: ‘ye must be born again,’—but also state with equal solemnity—ye *must* be Presbyterians—or ye *must* be Episcopalians—or (at least) ye *must* submit to the spiritual supremacy of the magistrate, and be of his church; though, being wise in his generation like the children of this world, he should support Episcopacy in one part of his dominions, Presbyterianism in a second, Romanism in a third; and should command honors to be paid to Moloch in a fourth.

It has already been stated, that, in more

modern, and especially in more recent times, the disposition to pronounce, definitively, the *sentence of spiritual condemnation* on other christian bodies, would seem to have been very nearly, if not entirely, confined to Episcopalians. This remark is made, simply from what is apprehended to be *fact*. The schismatic spirit has revealed itself among other denominations, chiefly in another way. The candid Dissenter must surely admit, that the manner in which some who are without the pale of the Establishment, have expressed their opinions respecting it, has been far from temperate—that invective has sometimes been substituted for argument—violent and threatening speeches, for the calm and enlightened assertion of principles—an attitude of attack, for a posture of defence—sweeping conclusions as to the motives of ‘churchmen,’ for candid discrimination, and charitable construction:—and that, while just rights have been justly demanded, and civil and religious liberty, in general, has been laudably advanced—an impatience has been sometimes manifested for the consummation of changes, which, however distinctly their shadows may be cast before them, or however favourable they may be to the spiritual interests of man, can only be brought about, with safety, by the gradual progress of public opinion, and in the lapse of time. Hence, it would be idle to deny that Dissenters

have contributed their share to the schismatic state of religious parties:—not by conscientious separation from the Establishment; which, as we have seen, cannot, on the principles of the gospel, be termed schism:—but by falling into the temptations corresponding to their political position.

But it must be confessed, that the Churchman has not always been content with sharing with the Dissenter, in the unhappy schism of angry controversy, and mutual strife; which, *evil* as it is, does not necessarily involve ‘*presumptuous sin.*’ He who is influenced by the unsubstantial dream of exclusive ‘divine right,’ or by the more tangible and earthly vision of human supremacy in the church, hesitates not to ascend the throne of Christ—to grasp the thunders which are reserved for the last judgment; and having laid his brother under an interdict while living, to threaten him with an awful doom hereafter!

Such is the solemn purport, and the bold responsibility, implied in the language already quoted! And much might be extracted of the same kind from recent writers; according to whom, the spiritual state of Dissenters is the most dreadful imaginable; since they are not barely schismatics, but *apostates*! The following are examples: ‘Dissenters, in dissenting and separating from the church, commit the heinous sin of schism; which, in my opinion, is a greater sin than that of drunk-

eness. I look upon schism, in fact, as tantamount to a renunciation of Christianity. What is it but a renouncing of the church of Christ—a renouncing of her ministers, and through them, of Christ himself?’ ‘ They by their schism, cut themselves off from the visible church, and cannot, therefore, expect to be considered as Christians ; but, according to the command of Christ, as heathens and publicans. In a christian point of view, we have nothing to do with them—we must leave them entirely in the hands of God ; they are without the pale of the visible church of Christ ; and we are to act in the spirit of what the apostle says : ‘ What have I to do to judge them also that are without ? Them that are without, God judgeth.’ The curse of God appears to me to rest heavily upon them.’

‘ I do not believe your societies to be churches of Christ, or their members disciples of Christ—or, in other words, Christians—any more than I consider your teachers ministers of Christ. I cannot see how, in what way, or by any means, dissenters can at all claim to be considered as Christians . . . Dissenters may, some of them, possibly belong to the invisible church ; with that, however, as we cannot discern spirits, we have nothing to do . . . Without bishops, priests, and deacons, there is no church ; and therefore all the various sectarian societies, which are with-

out the presence and presidence of a regular successor of the apostles, are without the pale of the christian church . . By rejecting the authority of Christ, as it exists in his delegated ministers, they (Dissenters) are guilty of rejecting Christ.'—Such is the spiritual condition of the myriads of professing Christians who are not Episcopalians—according to the statements of a work which would not have been quoted, had it not, shortly after its appearance, attracted additional attention, by its having met with some encouragement from a high authority in the Church. *

¹ Who speaks of it thus:—'a publication which I recommend, as containing a great deal of useful information and sound reasoning, set forth with a little too much warmth of invective against the Dissenters, entitled 'Letters to a Dissenting Minister of the Congregational Denomination, by L. S. E.'—The Bishop of London's Charge.

It is just to remark that, in the Second Edition of the Charge, the above passage is omitted, and a note states as follows: 'In the first edition of this Charge, reference was here made to a publication which contains some other instances of the disingenuous proceedings of the society in question. Upon a closer examination of the work alluded to, I have thought it right to suppress my reference to it, on account of the controversial bitterness with which it is disfigured.' Charge. Second Edition.

While it would be uncandid not to appreciate this suppression so far as it extends—may it not be regretted that the learned prelate should not have embraced the opportunity of expressly bearing his influential testimony

Similar is the language of another recent clerical writer : who, not without doing violence to the obvious meaning of holy scripture, expounds the thirteenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans as referring to *ecclesiastical* rulers ; and condemns those who do not belong to the Episcopal church, as incurring the guilt of being ‘ resisters of God’s ordinance.’ ‘ The text,’ remarks the author, ‘ throws its awful light over the state and prospects of the resisters, whatever their denomination may be, of God’s arrangements, and God’s authorities. Do the mysteriously-expressed punishments appear disproportionate ? Disproportionate they would be, to any offence whatever against civil authorities. But civil authorities are not the subject. The offences are *spiritual*, and the punishments ETERNAL. The offence is resistance to the love, the wisdom, and the power of God, and the punishment is—THE WRATH OF GOD’ ! *

Such is the doom pronounced on those who dissent from Episcopacy ! Can sentiments like

against the unchristian spirit of anathema (not to say of calumny) which pervades the work ; and of thus more effectually neutralizing the sanction he had previously given to its contents, by officially recommending it to his clergy ?—Truly these letters are disfigured by something more than ‘ controversial bitterness ’ !

* The Sword Unsheathed.

the above be contemplated by any sober-minded Christian, to whatever class he may belong, without feelings of deep regret? That many Episcopalians indignantly recoil from all participation in what appears to them nothing less than daring presumption, is a gratifying fact. As for the party condemned—they surely must rejoice in the thought, that ‘God is Judge, himself’; and may well exclaim, with David, ‘Let us fall into the hand of the Lord, and not into the hand of man’! It is happy for them that ‘the Lord reigneth’; and that he ‘restrains the *remainder* of the wrath of man’: for it is fearful to contemplate what might be the result, if these opinions were to prevail, and power were to arm the hands of some, whose imagination appears to be scarcely less filled with extravagant notions of spiritual authority, than the mind of the Roman Pontiff himself! When religious feeling is in alliance with a predominant, unscriptural, and enthusiastic idea; instead of controlling human passions, it may give to them a fiercer energy, and a keener edge—witness the fanatics of Munster, and their leaders Boccold and Matthias—witness the extra fury of all religious wars, and persecutions.

Do we recognise in these bold, condemnatory strains, anything resembling the spirit of the Saviour, or of his evangelists and apostles? Where would have been the unity of the apostolic church,

had either the Jewish, the Proselyte, or the Gentile converts, been allowed, unrebuked, thus to violate the genius of Christianity—to arraign their brethren—and to hurl anathemas against them, because their external practices were not the same! Did not the inspired apostle carefully endeavour to repress the first risings of such a spirit?—*not* by demanding the surrender of judgment and conscience to uniformity; but by enjoining mutual charity and forbearance. Unhappily, there have always been those within the precincts of the sanctuary, who would rush forward, where the apostles would have paused; and would enact and command, where they have left things undecided! Is not *he*, then, the true schismatic—who, trampling on the liberty wherewith Christ has made his people free, would consign to ‘uncovenanted mercies’—or even to ‘eternal wrath,’ those who differ from himself, on points which the scriptures have not made a constituent part of religion; but which *he* presumes to declare essential?

It might have been supposed that if no other consideration were capable of preventing the formation of these *exclusive* opinions, the conflicting views of the advocates of Episcopacy, as to the *basis* on which it should rest, might have taught moderation. It is remarkable that Hammond and Dodwell, zealous as they are for this form, both, in effect, renounce its apostolical

origin ; since they admit that, in the churches instituted by the apostles, there was no subordination among the ministers ; and while these writers differ widely from each other, they do not differ less from others on the same subject. That this discrepancy must always occur between those who would seek to render any one form of the church *essential*, is, we trust, already evident. Dodwell admits that ‘ no single writer (of the New Testament) so treats of church-government, as though he himself, or his author, the Holy Spirit, intended to describe any one form of government that should be universal and perpetual.’* Episcopacy—according to his own account, is destitute not only of scriptural injunction, but also of apostolical precedent—not having been instituted till the second century, and after the death of all the apostles:—yet, with remarkable inconsistency, this writer makes the very existence of Christianity to depend on the episcopal form and order. Surely the rebuke of the acute and learned Campbell, elicited by the presumption of a spirit so exclusive, was not too severe !

‘ Arrogant and vain man ! what are you, who so boldly and avowedly presume to foist into God’s covenant, articles of your own devising, neither expressed, nor implied in his words ? Do you venture, a worm of the earth ? Can you think

* Dodwell’s Parænesis. N. 14.

yourself warranted to stint what God hath not stinted, and, following the dictates of your contracted spirit, enviously to limit the bounty of the Universal Parent, that you may confine to a party, what Christ hath freely published for the benefit of all? Is your eye evil, because he is good? Shall I then believe, that God, like deceitful man, speaketh equivocally, and with mental reservations? Shall I take his declaration in the extent wherein he hath expressly given it; or as you, for your own purpose, have new vamped, and corrected it? ‘Let God be true, and every man a liar.’ . You would pervert the plainest declarations of the oracles of truth, and, instead of representing Christ as the author of a divine and spiritual religion, as the great benefactor of human kind, exhibit him as the head of a faction—your party.*

As it is presumptuously schismatical to condemn others, on account of things non-essential, or of doubtful obligation; so, on the other hand, THE ATTEMPT TO LOWER THE TONE OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, or to treat it as uncertain, may be regarded as a cause of schism, the final tendency of which, is to heresy, or apostasy. The least that can be affirmed of any great departure from the simplicity of the truth, is, that it is

* Campbell’s Lectures on Ecclesiastical History. Second Edition. Vol. i. pp. 90. 91.

a baneful source of variance, and is destructive of unity.

The divine Redeemer declared : ‘ I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.’ There is an attractive force in *the gospel*, for which no human learning, or eloquence, can prove a substitute. Truth, either with or without adventitious appendages, has power to win the heart. How frequently has it happened, that a costly sanctuary, in which a dry, cold, semi-pelagian morality was preached, has been left desolate ; while the gospel has drawn crowds, though proclaimed by an humbler instrument, and beneath a meaner roof. Jealousies and schisms have in this way arisen, through the ‘ offence of the cross ;’ and those who have been the authors of the mischief, have frequently been most ready to fasten on others the charge of schism. He is not the schismatic, who is faithful to the doctrine in which, happily, almost without exception, all Protestant communities agree—the ‘ doctrine of Christ’ :—so far as schism will admit, in this case, of being regarded as distinct from more fatal error, it lies on the other side. He, rather, is the schismatic, who explains away the Saviour’s declaration : ‘ Ye must be born again’ ;—who denies the doctrine of conversion, and the influences of the Holy Spirit ; or maintains that they are applicable only to heathens—who treats distress of mind on account of

sin, as ‘hypochondriasm,’—faith and christian experience, as an ‘enthusiastic’ dream—the justification of a sinner before God through the righteousness of Christ, as ‘mysticism’—spiritual religion, as ‘over-much righteousness’—and evangelical truth, in general, as ‘metaphysical divinity’!

Again : though there be such agreement in the main as to doctrine, that a ground exists for a large degree of christian union, schisms and divisions may be produced by THE IMPOSITION OF TERMS OF COMMUNION, WHICH ARE NOT PRESCRIBED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, AS CONDITIONS OF SALVATION. It is clear that the plea on which the apostle Paul founded his exhortations to the Romans, respecting mutual toleration between the Jewish and Gentile converts, was, that each was accepted of God on the broad principles of the gospel: for ‘*God hath received him.*’ In his epistle to the Philippian Christians, also, the apostle assumes that although they were so far ‘*perfect,*’ as to have rightly received all fundamental truth—there might still be *some* things, in respect to which, diversity of opinion existed. The legitimate method of obtaining a nearer coincidence of views on these subordinate points, was devoutly to seek the divine guidance. In the mean time, they were to be cordially united in the ordinances and the practice of the gospel, up to the last limit

which conscience would allow. ‘Let us, therefore, as many as be *perfect*, be thus minded: and, if in anything ye be otherwise (differently) minded; God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, *whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*’*

How different the genius of Christianity, as here exhibited, from the ecclesiastical, *imposing* spirit, which has been universally indulged, more or less, in the christian church! Can we, for a moment, imagine that St. Paul would have given his consent to the *imposition* of vestments, postures, forms, or canons — as *indispensable conditions*, either of exercising the ministerial office, or of enjoying the ordinary privilege of communion? Impossible! Ere the liberty of the gospel could be made so far to give place to a coercive uniformity, the last ray of apostolic glory had departed—the church had become a theatre for the display of human pride and ambition—and the echo of that catholic aphorism had ceased and been forgotten: ‘Let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother’s way.’

It is remarkable that such a man as Bishop Heber, should not have better understood the case between the Non-conformists and those who demanded uniformity as the condition of

* Philipp. iii. 15. 16.

unity—than to represent the difference as merely relating to ‘the colour of an ecclesiastical garment, the wording of a prayer, or the injunction of kneeling at the sacrament.’* The real question at issue—the momentous principle at stake—was, whether God, or man, was to be the lord of conscience?—Were the things imposed ‘*indifferent*’?—then, what man, or set of men, had a right to make them *essential*, by declaring them indispensable terms of communion? Even were it true that those who objected to these terms, were over-scrupulous, or fastidious;—yet was it proper to constrain them? The Jewish Christian of the apostles’ time, is described as one ‘who is *weak*, and eateth herbs’:—would it have been an act of christian justice or charity, to *compel* him either to eat meat which he regarded as ‘unclean,’ or forfeit the fellowship of his brethren?—‘Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not: and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth.. Why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.’

Calamy shows that the Nonconformists not only felt insuperable conscientious objections to many things that were enjoined, but also to *the principle* of imposing what Christ had not instituted; as ‘they thought making it necessary, is a

* Heber’s Life of Jeremy Taylor, p. 100.

manifest encroachment on the kingly power of our Saviour; as it is making new terms of communion:—in which they durst not concur . . The canon forbids ministers, upon pain of suspension, to give the Lord's Supper to any that do not kneel. This also they considered as making a new term of church-communion, contrary to Christ's appointment, which requires all Christians to receive each other in love and concord, and not to doubtful disputations; as depriving Christ's members of their right; an usurpation upon men's consciences; and a means of dividing the church. Even those of them who could not think kneeling sinful, and who could themselves have complied with it, were yet afraid of excluding others upon such an account, as it was far from being a necessary matter.'

After enumerating the principal reasons of their nonconformity, their biographer thus proceeds: 'Upon the whole, as for the above reasons they thought their separation from the church of England was not sinful, they endeavoured to manage it so peaceably and charitably, that it might not become schismatical. A main expedient pitched upon by the most moderate for this purpose was, communicating occasionally with the established church. Hereby they thought they should shew their love and charity to those from whom they ordinarily separated; and at the same

time manifest their firm adherence to their fundamental principles, of keeping the ordinances of Christ as he had appointed them, without additional terms of communion; and of pursuing a farther reformation.’¹—These were the men, who, because they thus conscientiously objected to regard man’s authority as on a level with that of Christ in the church, were pronounced ‘schismatical, and factious’ — ‘rebellious, serpents, a generation of vipers, unlikely to escape the damnation of hell.’² Truly it requires but little skill in casuistry to determine who, in this case, were the schismatics!

The grand principle—so much in harmony with apostolical precedent, of *demanding no terms of communion, which Christ has not made conditions of salvation*, deserves to be engraven on every chalice and flagon of the sanctuary; and to be ever before the eyes both of priest and people. To enforce any particular *modes* of admission to the privilege of the communion, as indispensable—any conditions which are not involved in the mere fact of a Christian being known, *as such*, to those with whom he is to have fellowship;—to render imperative any arbitrary tests, or subscriptions to human forms or articles—to insist on

¹ Calamy’s Nonconformist’s Memorial, by Palmer. Vol. i. pp. 40. 41. 54.

² See Baxter’s Life, by himself. Part i. p. 376.

these, as *necessary* terms of being received as a christian brother :—this is surely to throw a sectarian fence around the table of the Lord—to make an unauthorized requirement of the surrender of christian liberty—and to run the risk of keeping those at a distance, whom Christ has received. Such barriers to charity and union, have not been confined to national religious establishments : they have existed in dissenting churches, in the form of certain regulations as to the mode in which it has been supposed the eligibility of candidates for communion ought to be ascertained ;—or in confessions and summaries of doctrine to be subscribed, which have included articles not fundamental. At present, it is believed, that, among the dissenting communities in general, everything which is capable of being regarded, even by the most scrupulous, in the light of an external *test*, is fast growing into desuetude. There is, however, one important example remaining—that which relates to *baptism*.

The case alluded to, is that of *strict communion* ; as maintained in many of the Baptist churches. It certainly does appear singularly inconsistent, that a minister of the gospel should be fully recognised as such—by being requested to occupy the pulpit ; but, on descending from it, —after having led the devotions of the church, united with them in praise, and edified them by

his preaching—should be refused a place at the table of the Lord ! Yet this is not an imaginary circumstance—it has actually occurred, to the very letter ! But strange as this conduct may seem, it is founded on the principle, generally prevalent, *that baptism is a preparative to communion* : the chief difference, in this respect, between the strict-communion Baptist and the Pædobaptist, being—that the former regards those only as eligible to the communion, who have been immersed ; all others being in his view unbaptized : while the latter admits all Christians who have been, in either way, baptized.

The church early fell into the error of confounding the sign with the thing signified. The baptism of water was identified with the baptism of the Spirit, and with the washing away of sin. Hence the way was soon prepared for making it absolutely essential to salvation ; and therefore to communion. It appears incapable of proof from scripture, however, that any such dependence of the Lord's Supper on baptism was intended—as that an *error* with regard to the latter, invalidates either the obligation, or the *claim*, to the former. This has been shewn, we conceive, in a manner decisive of the question, by one of the most endowed minds which have ever consecrated their powers to religion:—the distinguished ornament of the Baptist community—but a star

of the first magnitude in the firmament of the universal church :—a man who combined reasoning powers of the highest order, with an imagination restrained only by the most exquisite taste—and a reach of thought which soared, as on a seraph's wing, along the confines of all that is revealed—chastened and guided by a sublime devotion. In his discharge of public duties, humility seemed to find in greatness its natural ally ; and the genius of the man, was gracefully blended with the earnest piety and devotedness of the minister. Happy, indeed, were those who rejoiced in the immediate possession of this burning and shining light !—but such a man was not born for a denomination. As his devout mind was too acute and comprehensive, not to conceive clearly the grand outlines of the christian scheme ; so his soul was too vast to find a theatre for itself in aggrandizing a non-essential party-distinction, which he most conscientiously received. It was a sentiment worthy of Robert Hall, that the difference which subsists among Christians as to baptism, *ought not to be made ' the basis of sect '*—but should merely be ' maintained as a private opinion.' This he considered to have been the case among the Waldenses and Albigenses, previously to the Reformation.*

The unrefuted arguments, and the catholic spirit, of the great author of ' Terms of Commu-

* See Terms of Communion, by Robert Hall. p. 174.

nion,' have undoubtedly undermined the party-wall which, in our day, is the grand opprobrium of those who glory in freedom from the yoke of human impositions. But more than half the Baptist churches in England, still practise strict communion: in Scotland, the proportion is greater: and the Baptists of America, are almost universally strict communionists. 'Many individuals are strongly inclined to mixed communion; but scarcely any of the churches' (seven thousand in number) 'would tolerate it, or even allow the latitude of an occasional fellowship with those whom they deem unbaptized, to any of their members.'* Such are still the views of Christians! To say, however, that such men as Booth and Fuller were schismatical, would be to accuse them of dispositions which they did not possess. If they erred, their error was of the head—not of the heart. Yet it must be admitted that their influence tended greatly to sanction a practice, which appears quite contrary to the genius of the gospel, and which has much alienated Christians from each other. Strict communion tends to make good men, men of the denomination; who, were they to enumerate those whom they had baptized, would, perhaps, be less likely than Paul, to *forget* any—or to say, 'I know not whether I baptized any other.'—Hall and Hughes were men of the uni-

* Religion in America, by Drs. Cox and Hoby. 1837. p. 514. 524.

versal church; and would have more entirely sympathized with the apostle, when he said, 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' Ought acknowledged Christians to be excluded from communion, even though they may *err* as to baptism? Have not the best of men, from time immemorial, differed on this point? which was already controverted, before the end of the second century; and the details of which are evidently left far more obscure in scripture, than the obligations of mutual charity, and the grand general principle that the genius of Christianity is not *external*—but is of the inner man.

When exclusiveness and *imposition* in religion are found in alliance with *authority*, the result is seldom confined merely to the denial of spiritual privileges; but is developed in THE ATTEMPT TO TYRANNIZE OVER CONSCIENCE, BY PENALLY ENFORCING CREEDS, FORMULARIES, AND VARIOUS ECCLESIASTICAL LAWS.* The schismatical spirit now assumes the frightful form of persecution, under the name of 'the better ordering of religion.' The rights of man as a religious being, are trampled on. *Persuasion*, which is of the essence of Christianity—the lock of her strength—the secret of her attractive power—is exchanged for the coercion of pains and penalties. Erring man assumes infallibility. A

* It was particularly desired, in the advertisement proposing the Essay on Schism, that notice should be taken of this flagrant species of the evil in question.

puny mortal dares to usurp the throne of Christ, and to reign over his church. Religion is now another name for submission to authority. The bands of love—the only ties of the family of God, are rudely broken by the rod of persecution; and little more than a hollow uniformity is substituted in their place. Christ would not allow force to be employed, even against those who were unequivocally guilty of rejecting him:—but the tyrannical schismatic hesitates not to persecute the best of men. When the Samaritans did not receive Jesus, we find James—and even *John*, (so much had he yet to imbibe of the spirit of his master!) exclaiming: ‘Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, as Elias did?’ How often has the rebuke given in reply, been since needed: ‘Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of’!

What scenes has not the church of Christ presented, when groaning under the yoke of man! What deeds have not been perpetrated in the name of religion—in the name of the benevolent Saviour! What furious and bloodstained schisms have raged among the professed peacemakers of the earth, in the anti-christian strife for power!—Let all the wars and persecutions that have been carried on under the alleged sanction of injured, libelled Christianity, recount the dreadful tale! Let the fire and the flood tell it—the dungeon and the scaffold—the rack and the wheel

—the sword and the gibbet! Let the rocks and the caves—the forests and the mountain-snows repeat it—more hospitable to the outcast wanderer, than the heart of man calling himself Christian! Let the burning stake declare it—where Catholic and Protestant have mingled their ashes together, for denying the supremacy of a fallible man, over mind and conscience!

What party, when circumstances have placed it in temptation, has been ‘without sin,’ in reference to the *great transgression* of the church? What bigot to his sect may not blush to own, that men of *his* denomination, have, in their turn, had a share in spiritual tyranny, and in converting the church into a scene of public strife? Neither the Episcopalian, nor the Presbyterian—nor even the Congregationalist, can claim exemption; though it is certain that the latter has been far less prone to assume the ecclesiastical dictator, than the rest; nor indeed *can* he act the religionist, and attempt to rule in the church by the arm of civil authority, without a virtual denial of his distinguishing principles. But while the Christianity of the New Testament would have taught all parties ‘not to judge one another;’ the tide of evil times, setting in with the inward impulse of ambition, may render instruments of religious oppression, those whom no dreams of divine right, or of an almost equally divine church-power, would have made

persecutors. An Independent Cromwell, as at the helm of power, may have been, to a great extent, free from the capital charge of spiritual tyranny, which attached to a Presbyterian parliament, or an Episcopalian Charles: the impartial historian may make allowances for political circumstances; and for the dilemmas and entanglements, in which religion, as well as civil government, may have been involved by previous corruptions and despotisms; which have left behind them a chaos, not reducible to order without the agency of ruder elements than charity:—but the candid Christian who reflects on the history of the church, will admit that it would be hard to find the party, which, when in power, has been guiltless of all acts amounting to retaliation and persecution. ‘Toleration,’ in all its range and bearings, has even yet to be more practically understood; and the principles of religious freedom, set forth in the immortal pages of Milton and of Locke, harmonious as they are with scripture and with reason, have triumphs still to achieve.

Though these principles were the legitimate offspring of the Reformation, how slow has been their growth! To this fact, the ecclesiastical history of every Protestant country in Europe would too amply testify. Nay, intolerance transplanted itself to the western world—not merely in the form of a schismatical distance and alienation be-

tween religious denominations, which is still not unknown on the other side of the Atlantic,—but also in the more hideous shape of *christian persecution*. The antiquated and frightful spectre of religious tyranny, sought to trouble the new and boasted land of liberty; and—strange to say! too long found an abode among those, who, had they understood the principles which made that far distant hemisphere their home, would have been foremost in exorcising and banishing the foul spirit from the world. The facts referred to, are the oppressive measures of the early Congregationalists of New England, to put down the Baptists and the Quakers. Happily, the worst forms of tyrannical schism are now matter of history, both in our own land and in America:—but what changes must take place in most other countries, before liberty of conscience can be said to have a recognized and secure existence in them!—Recent events in Holland and in Prussia, furnish signal examples. When will the rulers of the earth cease to set up the idol of outward uniformity, to be worshipped like Nebuchadnezzar's golden image on the plain of Dura!—when will they refrain from approximating towards the impiety of Darius? which christian rulers have imitated, by presuming to interfere with claims which belong to God alone!

On the subject of human impositions in the

church of God, the following remarks of Stillingfleet are too important to be omitted: ‘ He that came to take away the insupportable yoke of Jewish ceremonies, certainly did never intend to gall the necks of his Disciples with another instead of it. And it would be strange the Church should require more then Christ himself did; and make other conditions of her communion, then our Saviour did of Discipleship. What possible reason can be assigned or given why such things should not be sufficient for communion with a church, which are sufficient for eternal salvation? And certainly those things are sufficient for that, which are layd down as the necessary duties of Christianity by our Lord and Saviour in his Word. What ground can there be why Christians should not stand upon the same terms now which they did in the time of Christ and his Apostles? Was not Religion sufficiently guarded and fenced, in *them*? What *Charter* hath Christ given the Church to bind men up to more then himself hath done? or to exclude those from her society who may be admitted into heaven?’

‘ Will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from communion with his Church, whom he will vouchsafe not only crowns of glory to, but it *may* be *aureolæ* too, if there be such things there? The grand commission the Apostles were sent out with, was only to *teach*

what Christ had commanded them. Not the least intimation of any power given them to impose or require anything beyond what himself had spoken to them, or they were directed to by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God. It is not whether the things required be lawful or no? which I now inquire after, (of those things in the treatise itself,) but whether they do consult for the Churches peace and unity who suspend it upon such things? How far either the example of our Saviour or his Apostles doth warrant such rigorous impositions? . . . There were great diversities of practice and varieties of observance among Christians, (in the apostolic times,) but the Holy Ghost never thought those things fit to be made matter of Laws, to which all parties should conform. All that the Apostles required as to these, was mutual forbearance and condescension towards each other in them. The Apostles valued not *indifferencies* at all, and those things it is evident they accounted such, which whether men did them or not, was not of concernment to salvation. Without all controversies, the main in-let of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the christian world, hath been by adding other conditions of Church-communion than Christ hath done.*

* Preface to the *Irenicum*.—It is a striking instance of human inconsistency, that the author of the above admi-

If these sentiments be just—and there is little danger that any ingenuity will ever be able to confute them — if Christ and his apostles have thus exhibited the genius of Christianity ; what words can describe the guilt of that presumption and tyranny, which have occasioned so many awful schisms in the church of God ! The examples, unhappily, have been too numerous in our own country, to require that we should go further for illustrations.

By the Acts of ELIZABETH, *uniformity* was rendered compulsory. Those who absented them-

able remarks should afterwards have written the ‘ Mischief of Separation.’ But from having been the humble country pastor, desirous of healing the ‘ Churches Wounds,’—he was now the intolerant dignitary, inflaming those wounds by urging the charge of ‘ schism ;’ and laying himself justly open to the sarcasm of Barret’s exposure of his tergiversation, entitled ‘ The Rector of Sutton committed with the Dean of St. Paul’s.’ He also incurred the severe remark of Burnet, that ‘ he went into the *humours of the high sort of people* beyond what became him ; perhaps beyond his own sense of things.’—The moral of such examples (and they have been by no means uncommon) would seem to be, that the fewer temptations to earthly ambition the church presents, the better. But Stillingfleet’s fundamental error exists in the *Irenicum* ; in his doctrine of the spiritual supremacy of the magistrate—a doctrine which cannot be reconciled with the above extract from the preface.

selves from church, or were found at a 'conventicle;' or who had denied the supremacy of the arbitrary queen over mind and conscience,—were ordered to confess that they had '*grievously offended God.*' A declaration was also enforced, that '*In the Articles of the Church, and the Book of Common Prayer, there is nothing contrary to the word of God.*' The sufferers by these tyrannical laws were the Puritans—men of various opinions on external points; but agreeing in main doctrines, and including among them the chief part of the piety of the times. It mattered not how peaceably they conducted themselves; or how conscientiously or devoutly they acted in rejecting the 'crudities of yesterday's popery,' and the human inventions that were put on a level with revealed truth: the punishments annexed to non-conformity, or which followed in the train of a determined adherence to it, were fines—dungeons—banishment—perpetual imprisonment—confiscation of goods—public excommunication—and death! By means, moreover, of that Protestant Inquisition, the *High Commission Court*, with its *ex-officio oath*, the ecclesiastical delinquent became his own accuser; and an informer against his nearest kindred. It is easy to perceive from the operation of such measures, that oaths and tests of uniformity have this brand of iniquity and injustice broadly marked on them:—that while they

fail to reach the insincere, time-serving dissident, who can subscribe *ex animo* with mental reservation and without belief, they fall with all their oppressive weight on the most conscientious men. These were they who were exposed to persecution and death; and who were sometimes denied christian burial!—And this among Protestants!—to promote Protestant uniformity!—to secure the unity of the Protestant faith!—*Et tu Brute!*

King JAMES's 'Book of Sports,' recommended athletic exercises, May-games, and ales, on the christian Sabbath—for the amusement of those who had attended church in the forenoon; and to prevent their hearing Puritan ministers! Those of the clergy who would not read in the church this charter for irreligion and profaneness, were suspended and proscribed from their functions and their livings. In the mean time, a prohibition was issued against preaching on 'the doctrines of grace;' and teaching more than the *bare letter* of the catechism.

Among the causes of the rupture between the unhappy CHARLES and his subjects, stands prominent the tyranny of the High-Commission Court; and of its coadjutor, the ancient court of the *Star-Chamber*, now become intolerable—cruelly punishing 'schismatics,' and the 'contumacious,' by cropping of ears, slitting of noses, branding of faces, whipping, gagging, and such-

like punishments worthy of the Romish Inquisition. It was characteristic of those who abrogated the Lord's-day by a republication of the Book of Sports, and by the Sunday masquerades and revels of the court—to compel all ecclesiastical persons to take an oath, twice a year, of ‘*conformity in rites and ceremonies* :’ thus awfully exemplifying the Saviour’s description of those who ‘made clean the outside of the cup and platter,’ but who ‘within’ were ‘full of extortion and excess!’

It was not in the nature of the convulsions which finally involved the throne and the episcopal church in ruins—to leave no place for the schisms which are produced by spiritual tyranny. This may impose a Presbyterian *directory* on pain of fine and imprisonment, as well as an Episcopalian liturgy : a Parliamentary ‘Solemn League and Covenant,’ as well as ecclesiastical canons. Presbyterian uniformity prohibited Episcopalians from using the forms to which they were attached, even in their *closets* and their *families*. Could Episcopacy assume a loftier dominion over conscience ! or the Church of Rome lay every religion but its own under a more inquisitorial interdict ! The *decrees* of the Assembly of Divines for the ‘*settlement of religion, and the prevention of schism and sectaries* ;’ were ultimately based on the same principle as the *canons* of the convocation. To *prohibit*

‘ bowing at the name of Jesus’ by human authority, was of the same spirit as *commanding* ‘ kneeling at the altar.’ The ‘ ordinances’ of the PARLIAMENT ‘ against blasphemy and heresy,’ would seem but a milder form of the law ‘ *de hæretico comburendo* ;’ since they were the same in principle—aiming to produce conviction by the dread of punishment: for they enacted that if the delinquent, after imprisonment, refused to abjure his opinions, he should suffer death as a felon !

The same schismatical spirit which induced the Episcopalian to proscribe Presbyterianism, as a ‘ headless, handless Dagon ;’ prompted the Presbyterian to denounce all Episcopacy as Popery—to call toleration ‘ soul-murder,’ a ‘ cursed and intolerable toleration,’ and the ‘ great Diana of the sectaries ;’ while he bound himself to the ‘ utter extirpation of prelacy,’ and the ‘ suppression’ of all ‘ heresy and schism,’ as far as in him lay. Those who had opposed the tyrannical subjection of the people to the Episcopal clergy, were themselves tyrants in denying to the prisoner-king the consolation of having his own chaplain. In short—presumptuous and overgrown as was the power of bishops, who, in their spiritual courts, claimed dominion over the faith, the liberties, and the estates of millions ;—this tyranny was well matched by Presbyterians, who,

in the principle which they avowed, that they ‘*abhorred toleration*,’ gave an earnest of what they would have done, had they not been restrained by a military ruler who entertained more liberal views.

During the contests for power which marked the whole of this eventful period, it is impossible to deny that the Independents were incomparably the most tolerant of the contending parties. But religious dissension broadly characterized the conflict from the outset; and when the church is a Babel, and the world an Aceldama, amidst attempts to rear or pull down the tower of man’s supremacy in religion—all things are confounded, and we look for consistency in vain. When men are once embarked in the career of ambition, they easily become truants to conscience and to justice, on the score of self-preservation; and when carried away by temptation, contrary to their convictions, they may act as though, according to the supposition of Cyrus the elder, they had ‘two souls.’

CROMWELL once asked: ‘Is not liberty of conscience a fundamental?’ At another period he is reported to have said, that ‘the magistrate may settle religion according to his conscience.’ The *question* bespoke his conviction; which must be that of every one whose conscience is sufficiently enlightened to be free:—the *assertion* was that of a man who felt constrained by the necessities of his

position. Hence religious liberty was but partially enjoyed. Freedom of opinion and profession was declared to belong to all, excepting those who maintained ‘atheism, popery, prelacy, or any damnable heresy.’ Suspected of intending violence, Episcopalians had no ascertained rights; and were only tolerated by stealth and connivance. The Quakers also were persecuted. Political jealousy—not bigotry, now produced religious intolerance; and at length, all clergymen who had read the Book of Common Prayer in public, since a certain day, or who should hereafter read it, were pronounced ‘scandalous’; and were ejected from any situation which they held: nor was any person allowed to employ them in the education of his children.

The RESTORATION was the prelude to a new vial of wrath, poured out by the hand of ecclesiastical tyranny. In the reign of CHARLES THE SECOND, religious liberty, which had previously made great advances, was prostrated in the dust; and was trampled on the more recklessly, because bigotry and presumption were not unmingled with revenge. Even those who had been instrumental in promoting the king’s return, suffered with the rest. The *Corporation Act* debarred from municipal offices all who did not conform to the Church of England; and who would not *qualify* by taking the sacrament at her altars.

Thus was the Saviour's blood prostituted to considerations of state-policy! Quakers were punished for refusing to take oaths; their assemblies were prohibited; and the penalties were fines—imprisonment—beating—transportation—and noisome dungeons, with half-starvation. The *Act of Uniformity* enforced the use of the Book of Common Prayer; and revived the penal laws of Elizabeth. The consequence was, the exclusion of upwards of two thousand ministers from the church, with the entire loss of their maintenance.* The *Conventicle Act* pursued

* Respecting the grounds on which the Nonconformists acted, much misapprehension has often prevailed. Calamy, their biographer, reduces their objections to the *Act of Uniformity*, to five heads. *First*: They were ordered to be re-ordained, unless episcopally ordained before. *Secondly*: They were required to declare 'unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything in the Book of Common Prayer;' and to subscribe *ex animo*, that it 'containeth nothing contrary to the word of God,' and that they would use it in public, and no other:—whereas few of them had time to see it before the operation of the Act; and 'several things, after the strictest search they could make, appeared to them not agreeable to the word of God'—as baptismal regeneration—sponsors in baptism, to the exclusion of parents—the sign of the cross and kneeling at the altar, as made *necessary*—the assertion that there are three orders of ministers '*by divine appointment*' (here they appealed to Stillingfleet and Cranmer)—the doctrine that all who are buried, excepting the un-

the ejected to their homes ; and neither there, nor in the fields, could they meet for worship—ex-

baptized, the excommunicate, and self-murderers, are saved—reading the apocryphal lessons, under the title of Holy Scripture—the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed, though they approved the creed itself—the making confirmation *necessary* to communion—also some other and minor points. *Thirdly* : They objected to ‘ take the oath of canonical obedience, and to swear subjection to the ordinary ;’ as ‘ they could not think a variety of things’ mentioned as offences, ‘ deserving of so dreadful a punishment as excommunication,’ or of suspension or deposition. They pointed especially to Canons 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 38. 57. 58. 68. 72. 112., etc. ‘ They could not see that the church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, or hath authority in controversies of faith. They knew of no charter Christ had given to the church to bind men up to more than himself hath done.’ Many who did not, themselves, seriously object to the surplice, or kneeling at the altar, ‘ were yet afraid of excluding others upon such an account ;’ and ‘ durst not concur in the suspension of ministers who were more scrupulous than themselves.’ They also named the ecclesiastical courts as a ‘ capital reason’ for not conforming ; since strangers and lawyers, and not pastors in their localities, exercised authority in the church. *Fourthly* : They refused the oath which, while it abjured the *Solemn League and Covenant*, at the same time bound them not to ‘ endeavour any change or alteration in church or state.’ ‘ Many had not taken this Covenant ; and more were all along against *imposing* it ;’ but they held it ‘ their duty to seek to alter church-government, so far as they thought it to

cept under terror of dragoons, or of rendering themselves liable to fine or imprisonment—and ultimately to banishment; to return from which was confiscation and death. The *Five-Mile Act* pronounced it to be ‘schism and rebellion,’ and made it a heavy penalty, for any nonconformist minister, not having taken the oath of passive obedience and non-resistance, to approach (except as passing along the road) within five miles of any corporate town, or any place where he had formerly preached the word of God. The same act prohibited the Nonconformists from being instructors of youth. The *Test Act* forbade the holding of any place of trust or profit, unless the individual conformed, and presented a certificate of having received the sacrament at church, within three months of his admission into office.

Thus, under the monarch of the Restoration, notwithstanding the inoffensive behaviour of the Nonconformists, a quarter of a century of cruel intolerance and persecution, relieved only by tantalizing and deceitful hopes and promises, destroyed religious liberty; procured death to

be faulty.’ *Fifthly*: They could not subscribe the declaration against the lawfulness of taking up arms against the king, ‘on *any* pretence whatever.’—Calamy gives a candid and summary account of the views of the Nonconformists, on each of the above points.—See his *Memorial*, by Palmer. 1802. pp. 38—54.

thousands of individuals; and ruin to many more families. The succeeding reign of JAMES THE SECOND opened with violent demonstrations against the sufferers; which were relaxed only for the sake of favouring Popery. At the REVOLUTION, the Act of Toleration laid the first foundation for liberty of conscience; though this act had a long struggle to maintain for existence. Many of the Nonconformists, in order to shew that while they preferred their own modes of worship, they were anxious to cherish a catholic charity towards other Christians, had been in the habit of occasionally communicating at the established altars; but in the reign of ANNE, the *Occasional-Conformity Bill* prohibited this practice; and bound all who held offices, to refrain from ever going to a ‘conventicle,’ on pain of fine and disqualification. The *Schism Bill* followed, worthy of its name and its framers; for its design was to throw the control of education into the hands of one party—none but *entire* Conformists being now allowed to instruct youth. Scotland and Ireland, as well as England, were deeply involved in the miseries occasioned by such cruel attempts to enforce religious opinions.

It is matter of grateful contemplation, that since the accession of the HOUSE OF HANOVER, penal laws relating to religion have been gradually wearing away, either by repeal or non-

non-enforcement. At length, no Corporation or Test Act disfigures the statute-book ; and civil rights are enjoyed by men of all opinions. Schism is now, happily, forbidden to act the fury, as in other times, raging through the land, with the terrors of persecution in her train. Such woes as those that checked the Reformation, and marred its glory, have ceased. The woes that attended the dominion of the Stuarts were assuaged when the evil star of their dynasty had set. But the old leaven of pains, penalties, and privations on account of religion, is not yet *wholly* purged away. Those may justly be pronounced schismatics, who would disturb the peace of the christian church by bringing forth obsolete, oppressive acts, yet unrepealed, from the store-house of ancient bigotry ; and would thus keep up the sources of strife, among those who are one in faith and doctrine ; or who, if not so united, will never convince each other by coercion. He who is anxious for the removal of the causes of schisms and contentions, will rejoice in the recent laws which allow *marriages* to be celebrated in connexion with such religious observances as the parties approve, and which secure the civil right and benefit of *registration* to all denominations. Surely we may here recognise triumphs over the schismatic spirit of the past, and happy omens for the future ! Soon may the period arrive, when

disregard to the rights of conscience shall be matter only of history, and the ghost of former intolerance shall cease to haunt the sanctuary !

It is devoutly to be hoped that ‘ Committees ’ and ‘ Societies for the Protection of Religious Liberty ’ will ere long become unnecessary : for genuine unity between different classes of Christians will never have full and entire scope, till every vestige of those oppressions which tend to keep up the want of mutual confidence, shall be obliterated. Who, we again ask, is guilty of schism ? the man who peaceably claims the right to worship God according to the dictates of his judgment and his conscience, without incurring civil disadvantages ; and who, imposing his opinions on none, would allow the same right to all ?—or is *he* the true schismatic, who is not content unless his party *reign* where all are ‘ brethren ’ ; who is ever exclaiming, ‘ *Say now Shibboleth* ’ ; and who hesitates not to annoy and punish those who may differ from him, by availing himself of the last dregs of power which can be strained from laws passed in ages when bigotry and tyranny were triumphant ? Is it credible that the nineteenth century, the boasted period of light and liberty, shall record for the perusal of posterity, instances in which every possible impediment has still been thrown in the way of the registration of places of worship under the

Act of Toleration—examples (till equal laws prevented the opportunity) of the denial of the civil right of marriage to those who entertain certain views of baptism—refusal to bury the Baptist infant dead—and the like violations of charity and justice! Are there cases in which the agents in these oppressions feel *compelled* to act, by laws to which they have promised obedience?—do they *own* these laws to be such as Christ and his apostles would not have sanctioned? the greater is the necessity of their repeal. ‘Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.’

Though the worst days of intolerance are gone by, we trust, for ever! yet, even in recent times, the measures by which party contests have been either produced or inflamed among Christians, have sometimes hardly been distinguished from absolute persecutions, or from the direct operations of war. What would have been the surprise of the thousands who were ‘of one heart and of one soul,’ in the golden days which succeeded the Pentecostal shower of blessing—had they been told that the time would come, when the avowed disciples of Jesus would demand money from each other, as a tax for the support of certain minor differences; and would resort to confiscation, and imprisonment, and expensive and vexatious lawsuits, in order to sustain the claim! Yet these things still

exist in Protestant England! What would the Christians of the apostolic churches have thought of a pastor being forced upon a people by authority, and conducted to the pulpit by a band of soldiers—in defiance of the wishes of the christian assembly, and in enforcement of the law of *patronage*! Yet such scenes, long since the dismal days of Stuart tyranny, have been witnessed in presbyterian Scotland! How would the first Christians, who were in happy ignorance of the sophistries by which human law can gloss over the corruptions which human authority has introduced into the church—the Christians who knew the religion of Jesus only as a *spiritual* element, distinct from all the ‘elements of the world,’—a religion whose authority consisted in the power of truth—whose weapon was the ‘sword of the Spirit’—and whose conquests were achieved by charity alone:—how would those whose minds had received the genuine impress of Christianity from the example of Christ and his apostles, have been astonished to be told the plain unvarnished truth—that a time would come, when ministers of the religion of love would allow a stipend to be demanded for their official maintenance, at the point of the sword!—when they would be accessory to despatching immortal souls—in an instant—unprepared—to the tribunal of the Eternal Judge—for the sake of *money* (perhaps

splendour)!—that the preachers of charity, faith, and self-denial, would one day refuse to cast themselves on the providence of the Head of the church, and follow *any* honest employment, rather than that the blood of men—the blood of souls, which the church ought to have laboured to save—should be found in her skirts!—Let us imagine the dignified, but withering look of indignation, with which the benevolent Jesus, who forbade his disciples even to ‘*resist evil*,’ would have witnessed an attempt to *exact support* for his religion by the weapons of war! Or—though the splendid miracles of the apostolic era would have sustained almost any demands, what would have been the honest and indignant amazement with which an apostle, who could say ‘I have coveted no man’s silver or gold or apparel,’ would have received a proposition from his new convert, the Proconsul of Cyprus, to send a band of armed men through the island, to compel the inhabitants by force to defray the expenses of the apostolic mission!—If the case of unhappy Ireland is not precisely parallel to this representation, it is only because the corruption and degeneracy of the Christian church have, for so many ages, been consecrated by the name of law.

Finally: even where the ecclesiastical oppressions which have been so foul a blot on the name of Christianity are deprecated, the schismatical

spirit may still discover itself in UNNECESSARY DISTANCE AND SEPARATION BETWEEN CHRISTIANS OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS, WHO AGREE IN THE MAIN DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL. As private friendship consists harmoniously with benevolence towards all mankind; so a conscientious attachment to those modes and forms which we judge most in accordance with the will of God, receives a beauty and a grace when accompanied with a brotherly affection for the whole church of Christ. For those to unite in stated worship who most agree in rites and church-order, is a proceeding which human imperfection seems to call for, and which is most calculated to promote edification. But, surely, he whose heart is the abode of charity—the grand principle of the christian religion, will seek to carry union with other Christians to the utmost possible extent. His preference for any particular mode of church-government and worship, will not be allowed to interfere with his intercourse and christian co-operation with those who entertain other views. Instead of manifesting towards them a distant behaviour—much less a decided aversion, or a marked hostility; will he not embrace opportunities of recognising them before the world as his brethren, disciples of the same Master, and having the same ends in view—human happiness, and the divine glory? Will he not rejoice, when occa-

sion offers—nay, will he not *seek* occasion, to engage with them in some good work, sacrificing all external differences at the shrine of christian love, and for the sake of *the gospel itself*?

Happily, Christians have now no excuse for standing aloof from each other, on the plea that there is ‘no neutral, or common ground.’ If such a plea were *ever* tolerable, that time has passed away—and may it no more return! But such a plea was never valid, either in the court of heaven, or in that of conscience. No common ground among Christians! May the peculiarities that distinguish them, then, never be forgotten in the discharge of common duties, and the defence of fundamental truths? The truth itself is *common ground*. The BIBLE SOCIETY has adopted this common ground, where all can circulate the scriptures without note or comment. The RELIGIOUS-TRACT SOCIETY has found common ground: for here, without any compromise of their peculiar opinions, Christians may labour together in diffusing those grand doctrines, in which they are all agreed. The London CITY-MISSION has also sought to occupy this common ground; since the one duty which it aims to perform, is to proclaim the same great truths, orally, which are circulated by the Tract Society through its publications.

To dwell only on the first of these societies:—is it too much to ask Christians to merge all their

differences in the Bible itself?—to meet, sometimes, at the fountain-head of truth, and there to lay aside the feelings of caste and party attaching to them as located on the different streams which each traces ultimately to the one grand source? Is there any principle fairly deducible from scripture, on which it can be shown why Christians should not appear recognising that relation to each other which they derive immediately from their relation to Christ—a relation in which there is neither Churchman nor Dissenter, Episcopalian nor Presbyterian, Independent nor Baptist, Wesleyan nor Moravian, nor any other party name;—but where Christ, and the great salvation, are ‘all and in all’? May we not regard this union of good men of various denominations as furnishing a fair *touchstone of schism*? If schism be such an alienation of heart as leads to mutual repulsion, where there might be, and *ought* to be union—to unnecessary separation and distance, where there is so legitimate a field for combination and co-operation;—surely to decline connexion with the Bible Society, because it is not a denominational institution, is of the nature of SCHISM: for what is the essential character of schism, but a want of sympathy and cordiality with Christians *as such*?—as forming the mystical body of Christ? He, then, is not the schismatic, who, according to the advice of the apostle Paul to

the Jewish and Gentile Christians, follows his own conscientious convictions, without ‘judging’ or ‘setting at nought his brother;’ and is ready to unite with him in all things in which they both agree:—he is the schismatic, who, where there *might* be union, ‘causes divisions,’ by insisting, like the Judaizing teacher, on things indifferent, as essential to unity:—he is the schismatic who refuses to enter the bonds of brotherhood with the church universal;—who acts on the principle that there is still some higher and more sacred interest, than that of our common Christianity—some stronger and more decisive feature of the christian character, than ‘*love*’ to ‘*the brethren;*’ ‘*for the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us.*’

CHAPTER III.

THE DISGUISES OF SCHISM.

SCHISM is generally allowed to be so great a sin, that there is scarcely a crime in the decalogue, against which a stronger testimony has been borne by divines. The entire vocabulary of condemnatory epithets has been exhausted in holding it up to reprobation; and if the evil could have been remedied by zealous denunciations from the pulpit and the press, it would long since have ceased to be heard of in the church.

If schism still prevails, the cause is not to be found in the want of warning voices, proclaiming that it is a 'horrid,' 'detestable,' 'damnable offence.' Cawdry, a Presbyterian of the Protectorate, speaks of it as 'a crime so heinous and noxious, that no invectives against it can well be too great;' and Dean Sherlock declares it to be 'as damning a sin as idolatry, drunkenness, or adultery.' Nor has it failed, in our times, as we have seen, to be condemned in similar terms.

It is unfortunate, however, that many who have thus strongly described the evil of schism, have mistaken its nature; having understood it to be the voluntary separation, in outward observances, of certain classes of Christians from another class, which has claimed authority to pronounce all the rest in serious error—as not following several customs and practices which are admitted not to be essentials by many of the most enlightened persons who observe them. This remark applies equally to those who, with Cawdry, have regarded everything but Presbyterianism as ‘schism;’ and ‘the cursed fruit of toleration,’¹—as to those who have ventured to assert, with Sherlock, that ‘whoever separates himself from the Church of England, cuts himself off from the Catholic Church, and puts himself out of a state of salvation. Separation from the Church of England is schism.’² Now, without adding to what has already been advanced on the scripture-testimony concerning schism, as consisting, essentially, in the manifestation of an uncharitable, selfish, party-spirit, (whether attended with formal separation or not,) it may safely be affirmed that the sentiments just quoted would seem clearly to evince that, in charging others with being schismatics for separating from

¹ Independency a Great Schism. 1657.

² Continuation of Defence, etc. 1682. p. 389.

his church, a man may himself be a schismatic of the first order, under the guise of a 'sound Presbyterian'—or an 'orthodox Churchman'—or any other name. Schism is schism, whether exhibiting itself in the violent language of the 'Preacher of the Word at Billing-Magna;' or in the more dignified anathemas of the episcopal dignitary.

Yet whatever may be the conduct which professing Christians pursue towards those who differ from them, none are disposed to admit that they themselves are acting uncharitably. A contentious Christian, or a Christian who is given to judge and to condemn others unjustly, is felt to be so great an anomaly, that all refuse to own the character as theirs—none plead guilty to the charge, 'Thou art the man.' Hence the apologies for an uncharitable, or an exclusive party-spirit—hence the disguises of schism.

Uncharitableness and exclusiveness, in various forms, may be consecrated by the name of ZEAL FOR TRUTH. But should even *essential truth* be the object, unless the truth be pleaded for, or promoted, '*in love*,' zeal for it is no longer a christian virtue; but a mere gust of passion, or the efflux of bigotry or party-feeling. Instead of being a hallowed flame kindled by charity, zeal may be strange fire, like that of 'Nadab and Abihu, which the Lord 'commanded not.' Even though

it arise from pure abhorrence of sin or error, ‘the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God’—whether it would call down fire from heaven, as in the case of the disciples; or, with Calvin and the Swiss Protestants, would burn Servetus at the stake:—a deed of barbarism, which seems almost to have rendered the very ashes of the martyr a seed for the speculations of the heresiarch.

Mistaken zeal may also sacrifice the peace of the church, by dignifying with the name of important truth—things indifferent, or doubtful, or at least not essential. Or zeal may be expended on matters which involve a perversion of the simplicity of the gospel, and which tend to pain and to repel all sober minds. St. Paul, having spoken to Timothy of Christ as ‘*our hope*,’ reminds him that it was his duty to ‘charge some that they teach *no other doctrine*; neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith.’ The Judaizing teachers divided the church by vaunting of their descent from Abraham; and by their zeal for the supposed sacramental efficacy of the Jewish rites: thus exalting mere external and formal distinctions, to a level with spiritual religion. This same spirit, in a new form, attained its full measure, in the lofty, though visionary claims, and the ceremonial dotage of the

Romish Church. It has also corrupted Protestantism; and has appeared on the scene in some of the worst times of our own religious history:—we are sorry it must be added, that this spirit has again revived among us.

In the absence of all such evidence as an impartial mind would look for, we have the obsolete doctrine of *apostolical succession*, and nearly all that it entails, with the exception of a pope, again made part and parcel of Christianity. Salvation is proclaimed by the sacraments of the church, as administered by those who are regularly descended from the apostles by episcopal ordination! And what is the basis of this scheme? strained interpretations of scripture—forced analogies—uncertain and contradictory traditions—gratuitous, and sometimes incongruous assumptions:—in a word, *human authority*. It is no wonder that those who have imbibed the doctrines of the Oxford Tracts respecting the church, the ministry, and the sacraments, should be concerned to *apologize for the Reformation*, and should direct their attacks more zealously towards any other quarter than towards Rome. Luther himself, it would appear, is to be defended from the charge of schism, *only* because he ‘had not the slightest notion of separating from the (Romish) church, or rejecting its authority.’ The Reformed were ‘*still in the way of salvation*’; because

they ‘did not voluntarily separate themselves from the existing church; but were ejected by an abuse of authority’; they were therefore ‘not internally cut off from it.’ Yet it is affirmed, that ‘the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches were not properly churches of Christ.’ And why so?—One reason is, that ‘it does not seem that they could offer any effectual opposition to schism.’* (*Hinc illæ lacrymæ!*) No—truly they could not, if schism consist in following their example by *separating* from those who would *impose* terms of the ministerial office, or of communion, unknown to the New Testament; and would put these terms on a level with all that is sacred and divine in the truth of God!

This high-church doctrine of apostolical succession, is as destitute of the general suffrage of the Protestant churches, as it is repugnant to the genius of Christianity, and unsupported by any testimony from the apostles themselves. Moreover, it *unchurches* the bulk of Protestant Christendom—the Lutheran, French, Swiss, Dutch, Scottish, and Vaudois churches: also all Dissenting churches, and an overwhelming majority of the churches of the United States! Thus are myriads and myriads of Christians excluded from the pale of Christianity, whose principles would bid them die by martyr-

* Treatise on the Church, by the Rev. W. Palmer, vol. i. chap. xii.

dom, rather than deny the faith of the really 'apostolic church'!

These claims may be traced in alliance with ecclesiastical tyranny, among Protestants as well as among Romanists. For up to the melancholy period of 1662, the ancient doctrine of the church of England, and of the scriptures—that bishops and presbyters are the same, was still recognised in the fact that there was no difference in the form of their ordination. The Act of Uniformity, the masterpiece of Protestant church-despotism, put an end to presbyterial orders; and the high-church party which flourished under the Stuarts, were not satisfied till they had sanctioned their treasons against conscience, by fortifying themselves with the Romish figments respecting canonical descent, the power of the keys, and the efficacy of the sacraments. These obsolete claims might be passed by as the harmless dreams of things that *were*, did we not know that they are made by men of piety and learning; that they are recommended to the rising ministry; and that it is not yet too late in the world for mischief to be done, even by good men, to the best interests, if not to the quiet of society.

What effect can it have on the minds of men but to lull them into spiritual apathy and security, to be told that 'the sacraments *convey* that which they signify,' when administered by an apostolic

functionary:—that one sacrament ‘incorporates us into Christ,’ and ‘creates in our souls a new principle of life, making us partakers of the Divine Nature’; while the other ‘imparts increased union with Christ, a deifying influence, whereby God gives us to be that which man would have accepted of Satan—to ‘be as gods,’ being partakers of the ‘Son of God’!’¹ What inference will private Christians draw, as to the necessity of believing the truth, and of personal holiness, when the impression is conveyed to them from the pulpit, that provided the sacraments be administered by one who is episcopally ordained, neither the creed nor the practice of the *man* is of essential moment; and that even ‘a wrong system of doctrine’ does not invalidate ‘the ordinance of preaching’; ‘though in the main the given lesson be falsehood, and the proffered sustenance little better than poison’!² If the preacher is thus a kind of spiritual magician, may not the hearers easily content themselves with trusting to his *performance*? and if the priest ‘*should rest upon his office*,’ will not the people be likely to rest on *his* bare discharge of it?—But enough of a doctrine which is the foundation of all the worst errors of Popery; and the source of all the opiates to conscience with which the Romish

¹ Oxford Tracts, 68. 69.

² Sermons by the Rev. H. Melville, A. M. pp. 44—48.

church has deluded mankind—a doctrine which cannot but tend to produce divisions among Christians, as the least of its evil consequences !

Schism has also found an apology in the plea of PROMOTING UNITY. But this unity has, in fact, often been nothing more than a hollow uniformity. Unity of heart may exist, as it did among Jewish and Gentile Christians in the apostolic churches, *without* uniformity ; which, apart from unanimity in truth and love, degenerates into a bare ceremonial. For so far as uniform outward observances are the effect of mere compulsion, they are, if we may so say, but a kind of celebration of the obsequies of unity by mourners engaged for the occasion ; whether these be attired in the cowl, the surplice, or the Geneva cloak.

He who would renounce connexion with his christian brethren because they do not agree with him in externals, has yet much to learn in the school of the apostles ; and if he values ‘ descent’ from them, he will better prove his lineage by manifesting another spirit. It is in vain that we search the epistles for any evidence that the unity of the church was to depend on sameness in outward forms. On this point there is a noble negligence, which indicates the adaptation of the gospel to human nature : for in proportion as forms and modes occupy the minds of men, it is natural that they should think less of the grand spiritual ele-

ments of unity. Self-deception may easily lead us to imagine that we are promoting the unity of the church, when in fact we are but still farther dividing it, by identifying unity with our own external observances. It is far from certain that the unity of uniformity would best answer the ends of Christianity; even though it arose from unanimity in all things. Of one thing, however, we are well assured—that it is the moral beauty of unity in *spirit* and *affection*, that is to win the world. The followers of Christ are to be ‘one’—‘*that the world may believe.*’ Yet so little have Christians sometimes understood the intentions of their Master, that the worst schisms which have desolated the church have been produced in connexion with the plea of unity!

But would not genuine CONCERN FOR THE PURITY OF THE CHURCH lead us to treat with marked displeasure those who offend? Must we not do so, though unhappily strife or disunion should be the result of our fidelity? Is it right to acknowledge as brethren, those who are ‘separatists’? Are not such men to be regarded as ‘without the pale of the visible church’? or if we strain our charity to the utmost, ought we not at least to consider them as in such a state of backsliding from the truth, that it is desirable to have no fellowship with them?

Such language has not seldom been made the apology for schism: and the schismatic would

thus act the *Censor*, putting marks of disgrace at discretion on the obnoxious, with a power above the law. For where do we find in the precepts of Christ or his apostles, anything which condemns diversities in modes and customs, not affecting the substantial elements of the christian character? Can the passage be produced? Where do the apostles authorize us to consider the want of outward uniformity as an *offence*? Where is it referred to as matter of church-discipline? In what part of the New Testament do we find ecclesiastical canons, enjoining the punctilios of form and order, rite and ceremony? Or even if it could be indirectly *proved* from reasoning on scripture, that on some point not affecting christian morals in which all agree, our brother were in error; is it not a *greater error* to number him, on this account, among the notoriously wicked? — to treat him avowedly as a ‘heathen man and a publican’; and to make no distinction between him and an apostate? ‘Why beholdest thou the mote in thy brother’s eye; but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?’ The schismatical spirit would act on the principle of the laws of Draco, making no difference between the highest crimes and the slightest misdemeanours.

It is not uncommon for uncharitableness to discover itself, on the plea of BEARING A FAITHFUL TESTIMONY AGAINST EVIL. This is the spirit which,

because evangelical religion has sometimes degenerated into Antinomianism, would attribute the crimes that desolate society to ‘saintly magazines,’ and ‘a locust-swarm of tracts,’ ‘darkening the light’ and ‘choking the utterance’ of the ‘Bible’! Unless ignorance can be found within the precincts of a cathedral, it argues what is by no means better—to condemn institutions which are doing wonders in promoting both civilisation and religion—to despise those who ‘brood o’er the black missionary’s monstrous tale’—to assert that ‘the blackest crimes in tract-religion’s code are moral virtues’—and to speak of ‘missionary zeal and Bible-clubs,’ as the ‘*innovations* of the age’!—It is remarkable enough that the conclusion to all this should be, in so many words: ‘Therefore, without a comment or a note we love the Bible’!

But may not a testimony be borne against evil, by declining christian intercourse with those who do not belong to our communion? Do we not bear this testimony by keeping away from those scenes where the distinctions of denomination are waived, on the ground of liberality? Should I not be countenancing error, were I to frequent those assemblies and societies, where a ‘Babel of religions’ all appear as one? Would not each of the parties present feel that encouragement was given, in some

measure, to his own peculiarity? and would not this tend to lower the dignity of my own church? —Thus sensitively scrupulous may be the exclusive spirit! He who is under its influence cannot go so far as to meet, on the common ground of Christianity, and for purposes of christian benevolence, with those who differ from him in externals, though they agree here to *merge* that difference! To be present, it seems, would be to encourage the very peculiarities, (say errors,) which are *here* laid aside by those who hold them!

There are those who appear so exclusively prejudiced in favour of their own agency in doing good; that when good is attempted by others, it is in danger of being regarded as almost neutralised by evil. ‘A state-church is a great evil’—may we not then be expected to look jealously and coldly on projects, however benevolent, which originate with its members; and which do not seem in any way likely to give influence to the ‘*Dissenting cause*.’—‘Dissent is a great evil’—therefore some will have nothing to do with any society that is not under the sole direction, of ‘*our venerable apostolical establishment*’; and even then, perhaps, it must be something sanctioned by precedent—it must not, if possible, be an innovation.

Such is as yet the dwarfish growth of charity, that even those who are found making some sacri-

fices, in order to appear with their christian brethren of other names on the *platforms* of benevolence, sometimes fancy themselves called on to come, as it were, in the *uniform* of their church. Perhaps this may be done to avoid some of the misrepresentations of the less charitable of their own party:—but it would seem to be one proof, surely, that we have not yet arrived at the *millennium*—that a Christian should feel it incumbent on him to prove by argument, that in patronising the Bible, and the announcement of its truths to ‘all nations’ according to Christ’s command, he is not acting against his church—or placing his church in any ‘*danger*’!

But schism is no friend to *platforms*; and is seldom found so far from home, as to visit the assemblies of the universal church. He whose mind is imbued with the exclusive spirit, is apt to look at the peculiarities of other Christians through the magnifying glass of prejudice; and to behold them swollen into crimes. The denominational partitions of the church thus become impassable Alps of separation:—and the schismatical religionist is content that it should be so. For though he is ever ready to charge others with being the authors of ‘separation;’ he would stay the hand that would break down the barriers. Thus prone are we to condemn others when they are not guilty; while we are deaf to the advice: ‘Physician, heal thyself’!

How can it be shown that by maintaining estrangement of feeling and behaviour towards Christians of another name, ‘we are but bearing a becoming testimony against what is wrong’? He who cherishes this estrangement ought surely to have fully convinced himself, from the word of God, that these Christians are living in serious error of doctrine or practice:—but does their general spirit and character bear out the charge? Even if *he* be right in his distinguishing peculiarities, (and may he not be wrong?) are not *their* peculiarities rather infirmities than heinous sins? What kind of effort has he made to convince his brethren of errors which he treats as so momentous, that they are to be regarded as an *insuperable* bar to love? Has he reasoned with them, as he has had opportunity, in the calm and charitable temper of the gospel; and as one whose sole, undivided object, is *truth*: so that those who are not convinced by his arguments cannot but esteem his motives, honour his openness to conviction, and admire his spirit; while his exemplary character as a Christian secures attention to his opinions, and consideration for his fraternal admonitions? It is to be lamented that this course has but too rarely been taken by Christians: otherwise they would have agreed more in opinion; and where they still differed, they would not have allowed this difference so much to divide them in heart and in in-

tercourse. But it is characteristic of the schismatical spirit to have less regard for the truth, than for a party—or for a dogma which is regarded as settled, with privilege of being out of the jurisdiction of fair, dispassionate inquiry.

The zeal of the schismatic, moreover, is partial. A dissenter may be in his element in discussing the ‘evils’ of prelacy—or of an established religion, and in passionately denouncing ‘the church;’ while he may discover little devout concern at the present divided state of Christians, or at the vice and misery of the world. A clergyman of the establishment may be very brief and general in his warnings to the ungodly, the immoral, and the careless—he may leave many with an unawakened conscience, lulled to repose by the ‘form of godliness;’—while his thunder is reserved for the *dissenter*; and his hearers, as they are not dissenters, may congratulate themselves that they are guiltless of that sin which, more than almost any other, is pronounced to be ‘grievous’ and ‘deadly’ by their spiritual guide. Thus may we ‘strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel!’ Witness, further, the connivance of the present Oxford school, at the enormous heresies and corruptions of the apostate Church of Rome; while they have no charity for the Henrys, the Heywoods and the Mantons, or for their descendants. ‘We are unwilling to speak harshly of the

Romanists,' say these divines: 'whatever be our private differences with the Roman Catholics, we may join with them in condemning Socinians, Baptists, Independents, and the like. But God forbid that we should ally ourselves with the offspring of heresy and schism, in our contest with any of the branches of the Holy Church, which maintain the foundation, whatever may be their incidental corruptions'!* Are the grand points at issue, then, between Protestants and Romanists, to be passed over with the slight mark of '*private differences*,' arising from mere '*incidental corruptions*'? and are vast bodies of *orthodox* Christians to be regarded in as serious an error in simply not being Episcopalians, as those who deny that 'Jesus Christ is come in the flesh;' and that 'Jesus is the Son of God'!

Will it be said that BY KEEPING EXCLUSIVELY TO OUR OWN CHURCH, WE BEST PROMOTE EDIFICATION AND CHARITY? This argument is urged on the principle that when Christians of different denominations attempt combination, their peculiarities must produce collision, and excite enmity; whereas, by maintaining entire separation, they may live in peace. But this reasoning is sufficiently overthrown by the fact, that good men of various parties *have* thus united in promoting the objects of christian benevolence; and

* Tracts for the Times. Records of the Church. No. xxv. pp. 6. 8. 9.

with the happiest results. Such combination is therefore *practicable*; and many have felt that this kind of union has eminently tended to personal edification—to say nothing of its public utility.

Truly that would be a strange species of charity, which would be ‘promoted’ by those keeping as much aloof from each other as possible, whose chief testimony to the truth and power of the gospel, was declared by Jesus himself to consist in the *manifestation* of their ‘love one to another’! If charity be advanced by Christians confining their sympathies and their affections to a party, it would seem that the proverb, ‘charity begins at home,’ is but a fragment of the truth: we ought rather to read ‘charity begins, and continues, and ends at home.’ This might deserve to make a fundamental aphorism in the philosophy of schism; which, by its narrow policy and its exclusiveness, is the bane and death of charity; for whose tomb the proverb as thus amended might serve as an inscription, from which it might be learned that charity died for want of exercise and air: for it is difficult to imagine how charity can breathe, when immured in the confined sphere of a sectarian enclosure; since her native element is the universal church!

But an apology may also be made for schism, under the respectable names of LAW AND ORDER. We admit, say some candid spirits, that the regula-

tions of our church are restrictive, exclusive, anti-catholic:—better had it not been so; but these are ‘*our rules.*’ Thus may a schismatical distance between Christians be perpetuated from age to age! Let it not be forgotten, however, that the law of Christ is paramount to all human rubrics, canons, articles, creeds, confessions, or church-covenants whatever; and that this law is the law of LOVE. If any conventional enactments are obstacles to its exercise, it is surely high time for us to pause and to revise our system; to remember that we ought to obey God rather than men; and to cast this Achan from our camp! Are we living in the violation of the *grand precept* of the christian code, on the plea of subjection to certain human regulations?—what is this short of treason against the Head of the Church? Will such a plea avail, another day, in arrest of judgment for the crime of agreeing to annul the laws of Christ? If we have, by any means, really brought ourselves under what we feel to be obligations, habitually to disregard the great fundamental principle of Christ’s kingdom; the sooner we release ourselves from this thralldom the better—cost us what it may! The rejection of human ecclesiastical authority, when this has clashed with the claims of Christ and conscience, is a course, moreover, that is consecrated by no mean precedents. This path has been trodden by

the master spirits of the church—men of whom the world was not worthy ; and glory rests upon their names !

Happily, we have examples which evince that unity may be displayed to a considerable extent, among Christians who differ on minor points ; notwithstanding private regulations which yet impede the progress of charity in churches, and sometimes cause their ministers to be, as it were, ‘ ambassadors in bonds.’ The Baptist pastor who may not have been able to break down the barrier of strict communion which divides his flock, may still be found administering the Lord’s Supper separately to the Pædo-baptists. The clergyman of catholic spirit in the Church of England could not ask even a Hall or a Watson to occupy his pulpit, nor could he officiate in theirs ; because the time is not yet come for the Church to free herself from the fetters of sectarian bondage, which an iron ecclesiastical despotism rivetted on her anew at the Restoration :—yet there have been, and are, examples of clergymen, who have shown a disposition to go as far in charity and unity with their dissenting brethren, as their vows of canonical obedience will allow :—and may their number greatly increase !

But though no laws or rules may interpose, say some, yet does not PRUDENCE require us to avoid religious intercourse or union with those

who are not of our own church? A different course would be ill-advised—it would offend our connexions—some would not understand our conduct—they would ascribe it to improper motives—would think we were unstable, disorderly, *enthusiastic*—that our religious opinions were vacillating—that we were courting popularity—or sacrificing good old-established order, to novelty and the ‘liberalism of the age.’ We must be very cautious to avoid everything like *irregularity*, and to observe sobriety and moderation:—it is, therefore, much better that we should keep to ourselves, and take no part whatever in those heterogeneous religious societies, which are regarded by some persons as of so much importance.

CONSISTENCY, too, demands that we should maintain that line of conduct which some please to term *exclusiveness*. We are ‘orthodox churchmen’; and it would be highly improper for us to descend from our elevation, and associate for religious objects with those who do not belong to *us*; especially as we are of opinion that even those among ourselves who assume the name of ‘evangelical,’ are not to be regarded as ‘true sons of the church.’ Or again: we are ‘staunch Dissenters of the old school’; and in order to be consistent with the practice of our ‘*board*’, we must not admit into our body any who read a liturgy; though in other points they agree with us.—For, as far as

stiffness and exclusiveness are concerned, a '*board*' may differ little from a '*bench*':—but to the honor of the Congregational principles, this reproach has now ceased.'

Prudence ! Consistency ! — excellent qualities, without doubt. But there is a prudence with which the 'wisdom that is from above' does not dwell—there is a consistency in evil: and prudence and consistency come in a more than 'questionable shape', if they lead us to sacrifice charity and christian liberty at the shrine of party. In this way, golden opportunities may be lost, of dissipating visionary mutual prejudices, of improving the character of denominations, cultivating brotherly intercourse, and exhibiting to the world the true unity of the church—an ordinance, by the Saviour's own appointment, of greater than 'sacramental' efficacy for the salvation of mankind.

The spirit of schismatical exclusiveness may plead PHILANTHROPY, though it may not carry those who indulge it so far as to torture heretics 'for the good of their souls.'* *Our* principles are to be the grand vehicle of salvation to the world: *our* church-order is destined to become the ecclesiastical polity of the new creation ; *our* sanctuary the 'one fold'—the favoured spot, over which alone the cloud of the divine presence is to abide.

* ' Pro salute animæ.'

The millennial glory is to fill *our* temple; and our temple is to fill the earth.—Is the blessing of God, then, limited to forms? Is it no longer true that where ‘two or three are gathered together’ in the name of Christ, he is ‘in the midst of them’—except they be representatives of a hierarchy? and are the nations to be denied the bread of life, unless it be mingled with the *husks* of tradition? Has the Divine Spirit produced all that is genuine in ‘revivals of religion,’ in the old world and in the new, only in connexion with the popular order of the churches? or will the ‘sublimity of the millennium,’ as some one said, ‘consist in all the world becoming Baptists’?

Is it so! And must the treasure of the gospel lose its power to enrich the world, if it be not deposited in the vessels of your sanctuary! If God is ‘no respecter of persons,’ is he, then, a respecter of denominations? Has he not poured contempt on sectarian bigotry, by the blessing he has vouchsafed to the efforts of the various divisions of the professing church?—those whom you, perhaps, would exclude from christian communion;—or whom you, looking down from your airy castle of apostolical succession, and beguiled by your gorgeous visions of spiritual dominion and sacramental grace, of which apostles never conceived—would solemnly consign, by millions, to a forlorn peradventure of salvation, if not

to ‘eternal wrath,’ as ‘schismatics’ from *your* church ; while God is showing that, so far from being schismatics from *his*, they are actually receiving their share in the first-fruits of the great promise to the christian Zion: ‘The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee ; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee’ : ‘I will make thee an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations’ !

The diligent study of the history of christian missions, might prove of no slight benefit towards the cure of an exclusive spirit ; especially to those who say that ‘the *fact* of apostolic succession is *too notorious to require proof*’*—an argument of sovereign efficacy, if it be allowed that ‘ignorance is bliss’ ; but of little avail where it is not thought ‘folly to be wise.’ In the missionary registers, however, which contain facts that may now safely be admitted as ‘too notorious’ to need further ‘proof,’ we have what might be termed the *second book* of the ‘Acts of the Apostles’ ; and a greater claim to apostolic honors might be founded on these records, than on all the ‘*notorious*’ traditions of Rome. For as ‘he is a *Jew* who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart ;’ so he is the real successor of the apostles who has imbibed their spirit, and followed their steps—as Milton describes the primitive bishop, ‘unrevenue’d, un-

* Tracts for the Times, No. vii. p. 2.

lorded :— with brotherly equality, matchless temperance, frequent fasting, incessant prayer and preaching, continual watchings and labours in his ministry.' Such was a Schwartz, the ' apostle of the East'—an Elliott or a Brainerd, the ' apostles ' of the American Indians. Such have been many missionaries : and such are some whom death has not yet given to history ; and long may he withhold their names ! Have not the literary labours and the self-denial of a Carey and a Morrison, moreover, left a legacy of blessing to millions yet unborn, in India and in China ; though no episcopal commission ever authorized them to be divines ?

Let us unlearn the lesson of bigotry and exclusiveness, by perusing what God has done in conferring the marks of his approbation on the missions of Moravians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Wesleyans, both of Britain and America ; as well as on those of Christians on the Continent of Europe. Let us learn the ' notorious *fact*' that God has poured down showers of blessings beyond the limits of the little parterre which *we* have planted. Let Greenland and Africa—the Indies East and West—the South Seas and New Zealand—let the world bear witness !

Schism takes another form of disguise, when contentious tempers are cherished in the church, on the pretext of CHRISTIAN LIBERTY. In those

societies which are characterized by the popular principle, what mischiefs have sometimes arisen from schism under this name! Where all have a voice in government, mutual concession is the only guarantee of peace. In such circumstances, as in the case of political freedom, liberty, unless controlled, degenerates into license and anarchy. The lawless schismatic has ‘a right,’ he says, to ‘express his mind.’ He does not approve of the minister elected by the majority:—he ‘cannot profit’ by his ministrations. He does not like some of the measures of the society; or some of the individuals who promoted those measures. He is dissatisfied; and in his vocabulary, ‘*Christian liberty*’ is but a euphemism for the insubordination of a democrat, who fancies that he is entitled to embroil a whole fraternity; and who has not learned the lesson: ‘Be subject one to another’—in other words, (as applicable to the present case,) the lesson of yielding to the majority; or peaceably retiring.

On a different occasion, the schismatical spirit may plead the ASSERTION OF RIGHTS. The demand even for justice may become unchristian by excess, or violence. When a politico-religious warfare is going on in the community, it is easy to forget the great Exemplar; who, ‘when he suffered, threatened not.’ What prospect is there of unity, if professing Christians engage in the con-

test for their rights, civil or ecclesiastical, so fiercely, as to appear in danger of being ‘consumed one of another.’ Suppose a clergyman’s claim ever so *legal*, does not charity receive a grievous wound by the exaction of the last farthing? On the other hand, though the dissenter be really wronged by being compelled to pay to the direct support of a form of Christianity which he conscientiously disapproves—he is not exempt from the danger of sinning against charity, and adding fuel to the flame of discord, by indulging in indiscriminate censures, and intemperate attacks—and may he not in this way lay himself more open to the imputation of being influenced by covetousness, or pride, or passion, rather than by conscience?

When we consider what Christianity is, and how its Divine Founder, and his evangelists and apostles, acted in promoting it; must we not lament that attempts should still be made to uphold it by means of a tax felt to be odious? Where religion is so far mixed up with the *political economy* of a nation, as in ours, it is surely not very candid, after having subjected the resister of church rates to a legal process, or having thrown him into jail—to pronounce him ‘a *political* Dissenter’! Yet it may be a question of some casuistry—when will circumstances justify the resistance of such laws, beyond the limits of remonstrance, and using agency for their repeal? or how far, in these

cases, is the apostolic admonition applicable to those who regard themselves as aggrieved: 'Why do ye not rather take wrong'? At all events, these contests have tended sadly to aggravate the already existing alienation of parties: nor has any symptom of the disease of schism of late been more desperate. Strange to reflect—yet not more strange than true—the restoration of the spirit of charity, at the present moment, would appear a miracle scarcely less, than the production of order out of the confusion of the primeval chaos!

POLITICAL NECESSITY, also, has frequently been the apology for schism—and that of the worst kind. No maxim is more eagerly adopted by spiritual despotism, than that 'necessity has no law.' Queen Elizabeth is said to have declared that to permit divers religious opinions and practices was not consistent with her 'safety, honor, and credit.' To refuse conformity to prescribed ceremonies, therefore,—or to deny the queen's *supremacy*, was a state-offence; though attended with no further disobedience. Hence the sufferings of the Puritans; and of the devoted Brownist martyrs to religious liberty:—classes of Christians who already laboured sufficiently under their own mutual schismatical jealousies and variance. But ecclesiastical ambition, in the attempt to heal divisions by laws of uniformity, does but *poison* those wounds which, unhappily, the church too

often inflicts upon herself. So it was, again, when the Stuart policy imitated the Tudor ; and another long and dismal scene was presented in the tragedy of persecution. Political necessity was the plea for every one of those oppressive laws relating to religion, which render that period one of the darkest in our history.

But this pretext of political necessity has often been but the flimsy disguise of a baser order of feelings. Such men as Clarendon and Sheldon could have no sympathy with the *piety* of the Nonconformists ; and they were resolved either to neutralise their moral influence in society, by ensnaring them into conformity ; or to reduce them to beggary.—Motives more purely political would seem to have originated some of the late persecutions on the continent ; and princes do not appear yet to have learned that to attempt the coercion of conscience by pains and penalties, is but lashing the Hellespont—and aiming to bind its waves with fetters ; and what is worse—that such conduct is a daring usurpation of the throne of Christ !

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF SCHISM.

THAT schism is a great evil, Christians are universally agreed: the only question having arisen respecting its *nature*; which, as we learn from scripture, is identified with uncharitableness, in the form of contention, variance, jealousy, or party-spirit—whether attended with actual separation, or not. Nor would any one be found denying the evil consequences of *uncharitableness*. Still, to enumerate some of these may not be without its use.

The indulgence of a schismatical temper is eminently INJURIOUS TO PERSONAL RELIGION. In proportion as uncharitable dispositions prevail, the evidence of true piety is invalidated. For the want of love to ‘the brethren’ cannot be compensated by any endowments whatever; nor by any works of apparent benevolence; nor even by a self-denial amounting to martyrdom: For ‘though

I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and HAVE NOT CHARITY, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am NOTHING. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' As charity is so vital an element in personal religion, whatever is opposed to it must tend directly to the decay of the spiritual life. Uncharitableness and contention, therefore, may often be the inlet to other sins. At Corinth, the same individuals who engaged in factious quarrels, profaned the eucharist: and if we could accurately trace the various causes of sin among professing Christians, it is probable that not a few cases would be found, in which the strifes and divisions which have agitated churches, have proved, to individuals, sources of still further declension; or even of apostasy. The heart in which charity does not dwell, and which is not fortified by christian intercourse and association, is more open to assaults from the world; and various temptations will crowd in to fill up the void. Charity, on the other hand, is a great preservative against sin: 'He that loveth his brother *abideth in the light*; and there is *none occasion of stum-*

bling in him.' But if uncharitableness be once allowed to prevail, it may prove a fatal injury to him who cherishes it: for it generally allies itself with pride; and pride is a stronghold of sin, in which a man may complacently entrench himself for a life-time. Hence a schismatical spirit, either in the form of bearing a grudge against others, or of despising or condemning them, may blend itself with a man's whole profession of Christianity—his life may be, as it were, a life of schism!

Again: schism has often proved FATAL TO THE PROSPERITY OF CHURCHES. The fact is too well known to those who are versed in the history of the religious world, to require much illustration. From some unhappy cause, the spirit of discord has entered a society of Christians; and peace and love have given place to unseemly feuds, and a variety of evil passions. The ministrations of the pulpit have lost their power; for they have no longer been sustained by the affections of a united people, or by their united prayers. Each hearer has heard for others, rather than for himself; applying reproof and rebuke to *their* case rather than his own. Or the sanctuary has become half-desolate, for many who once entered it are no longer *there*. The meeting for social prayer has numbered but few; and the spirit of devotion has appeared to be quenched. The advancement of reli-

gion in the mind of the believer, has been arrested. Brethern have become strangers to each other. The youthful convert has been 'offended'; and has learned, for the first time, the painful lesson, that the true character of Christianity must be sought elsewhere than in the lives of its professors. Where all was order, there has been scarcely anything but confusion. The church, instead of diffusing light in the surrounding world, has itself become a scene of darkness. Its machinery of benevolence has been clogged; and its useful institutions have languished. The table of the Lord has been half-deserted. The friends of Christ belonging to other churches, have been grieved. The gospel has been disgraced: the house of God has become a by-word; and the taunts of those who 'rejoice in iniquity' have been heard on all sides. Thus has the church been laid waste by angry passions; and, not unfrequently, the pastor has had to bear the full brunt of the storm. The faithful servant of God has sometimes been sent to an untimely grave, by the grief and suffering which have been occasioned to him, by the scenes of turmoil and contention through which it has been his lot to pass!—and a congregation has been generations in recovering from the desolation produced by schism:—nay, has sometimes ceased to be.

If examples of strife or alienation of heart

among professing Christians were rare, they might be regarded as painful exceptions and anomalies; and if they were not notorious, they might be passed over in silence:—but schism has been THE GRAND SOURCE OF MISCHIEF IN THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL. The *worst kind of evils* which the church has suffered, have arisen from within. For when iniquity and corruption abound, and love waxes cold, those who are nominally the disciples of Christ may persecute each other in a manner not to be distinguished from that of heathens, excepting on account of the different state of society. Like the crowned monster, the offspring of sin, described in ‘Paradise Lost,’ who strode along in steps almost producing earthquakes,—*schism*, another child of sin, has proved the ‘king of terrors’ to the church, in the ‘execrable shape’ of tyrannic dominion over conscience—trampling on the heritage of God, till the whole has been thrown into confusion, and many sanctuaries have been trodden down! Nay—by schism, the professed church, which was designed to be the type of heaven, has sometimes more resembled a pandemonium, where every evil passion has found its congenial sphere!

Schismatical contention, whether identified with persecution or not, *prevents the growth* of that very *unity* which is its avowed aim:—for it is strange that unity is often the chief burthen of

the strife of schism ! Agreement in opinion, however, is in all cases much more likely to take place in connexion with mutual candour and toleration, than where this agreement is made a prerequisite to all visible unity. Hence it is remarked by Robert Hall, when speaking of the means of promoting the reception of truth, that ‘it is of the greatest moment to present it in a manner the least likely to produce the collision of party : for the prejudices of party are always reciprocal, and in no instance is that great law of motion more applicable, that re-action is always equal to action, and contrary thereto’. The truth of this remark has been but too abundantly exemplified in the history of religious controversies. For while *schism* itself would seem to have been proposed as the *cure* of ‘schism,’ (as though the doctrine of homœopathy were to be applied to morals as well as medicine,) the remedy has proved worse than the original disease : and the result has been a lasting alienation of Christians from each other. A more than Jewish wall of partition appears sometimes to have existed between them. For inveterate as were the prejudices of the Jew, his exclusiveness gave way to the spirit of the gospel. The Jew forgot his nature, and hailed the Gentile as a brother. But the party-walls which Christians have erected between each other, have hitherto defied the force of charity to break them down.

The prevalence of a schismatical spirit, lamentably *weakens the moral power of the church*. Christian piety and benevolence are the *climax* of all moral power. The church of Christ, in its true character, is a perpetual dispenser of the highest blessings to the earth—a great light in the moral firmament:—and such it was in the first age. But how has this light been obscured by the storms of dissension and strife! The church, while it shone with the glory which it faithfully reflected from Christ, compelled the most profane to behold and admire: but when the interests and passions of the world intervened between it and the great original source of light, the church was shorn of its lustre, and appeared to mankind, like the moon under an eclipse—a thing faded and disastrous—the omen of evil rather than of good to the earth! Nor till the church shall again emerge from the shade, and reflect the divine glory in holiness and love, will the earth rejoice in its light. For there is an intimate connexion between the visible unity of Christians and their usefulness: ‘Do all things without murmurings and disputings,’ says St. Paul to the Philippians; ‘that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.’

The schisms of the church are A NOTORIOUS

DISHONOR TO RELIGION. Other delinquencies may often be little known beyond the limits of a christian society: but schism, when it has become matured in strife and faction, has a trumpet-tongue; and the world rings with the clamour. The church then proclaims aloud its own shame, and invites the world to be the spectator. This is Christianity, says the scoffer; and these are Christians! These are the ‘saints’—the preachers of benevolence—the advocates of disinterestedness—the apostles of charity!—these who are contending for the mastery—who are persecuting each other—or quarrelling about what they so loudly condemn as the ‘unrighteous mammon’! It is surely time for them to hold their peace, and trouble us no more with their homilies on charity, till they cease to set an example of variance and contention, in the name of Christ!

Thus when schism prevails in the church, it may be said to give the *lie direct* to Christianity. The truth of religion, indeed, stands on a firmer basis than the consistency of its professors. But he whose mind has never been brought to bow to its power, will almost inevitably be affected by any deficiency in its reflex evidence, as seen in the characters of Christians. This evidence is perhaps the chief, if not the only appeal which Christianity ever makes to his mind. Hence the want of correspondence between the professions and the

conduct of those who bear the christian name, has always been the grand stumbling-block to the world. The *theory* of Christianity is, that the disciples of Christ possess the ‘*same mind*’ which was in Him; and mankind are given to understand that the peculiar mark of Christians is, their having ‘love one to another.’ But how often has the world had occasion to inquire, where are the disciples of Christ? If it had been said that those who are religious, are a people known by their making great *professions* of charity and benevolence; while at the same time they are often more indifferent to each other, more distant and repulsive, more hostile, more broken up into factions, than men in general—we could easily have recognised them:—but where is the vaunted bond of love?

Hence schism TENDS TO ENCOURAGE INFIDELITY. It is true, the objections of unbelievers against the historical evidences of Christianity have been answered a thousand times; and *science*, however put to the torture, with a view to cause her to nullify the claims of revelation, has uniformly, when her language was understood, borne witness to its truth. But the disorders of the church have been a popular argument against religion, more effective than all those of its most accomplished advocates in its favour; and the church, in allowing herself in schism, has cherished

her greatest enemy in her own bosom. The infidel may not now, as heretofore, walk openly abroad in the stole of the philosopher, preceded by the trumpet of fame, and announced as the presiding genius of a nation's literature. The path of Voltaire and Hume, of Gibbon and Paine, may, happily, no longer be the path to celebrity and honor. The arrows of infidelity may have lost their point, through repeated use against the adamant rock of Christianity. But the inconsistencies of Christians, and especially their public strifes, furnish infidelity with new materials. Thus Christianity, though impregnable in itself, becomes odious in its professors. The sceptic regards it as an incurable source of dispute; and may lay to his soul the 'flattering unction', that religion, after all that is *said* for it, is a mere theory; since professing Christians so frequently appear not to be practically, and in their spirit, different from other men.

Moreover, schism effectually PREVENTS THE CONVERSION OF THE WORLD. It would often be well if the Church had no spectators of her intestine conflicts: but she stands not alone; and on her, under God, depend the destinies of unnumbered millions! To her their salvation is instrumentally intrusted: for, from the church, all the world, even 'every creature', is, by the command of Christ, to receive the gospel. From the agency, and

from the character and spirit of professed Christians, the world derives its impressions of what religion is—whether it be a speculation, or a high and solemn verity—a mere form, or an affair of the inner man—a piece of human policy, or a divine and eternal reality:—whether its adherents be true men, or hypocrites in a mask, serving some by-end:—whether Christianity be truly a system of peace, and a boon to the earth; or one of the greatest sources of ill-will and confusion among mankind. It is not enough that there is a Bible which the world does not read; or that there are sermons which it does not hear:—the church is the world's Bible: it finds sermons in the lives of Christians; and happy is it for the world when Christians are 'manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ'! But should it be perceived that those who claim to be known by the distinguishing mark of 'love', and unity of heart, are chiefly remarkable for their mutual jealousies and feuds; the men of the world will pronounce religion to be a ceremony—a thing which it may be decent to talk of *professionally*, but which was never *intended* to be acted out. For the world heeds not what Christians believe, or what they *feel*, or what they profess. For aught the world knows, the creed may be the mere dogma of the *sect*; christian language its technical phraseology; and profession self-interest. But the world is a keen judge of what it witnesses; and

with Argus vigilance, compares the claim of Christians to superior virtue, with their actual practice. The discord and strife of the church excite the exultation of the worst, and perhaps the silent contempt of the better class of the men of the world: and thus, instead of being won by the moral influence of the church, multitudes are fortified in their unbelief and hardness of heart!

The schisms of the church have not only prejudiced the world against religion: they have also kept the *zeal* of the church itself in a languishing state; so that the agency and self-denial necessary to save the world have been withheld. Christians have been too much engaged in maintaining their ground against each other, to unite their energies in waging the spiritual and holy war by which the earth is to be subdued to Christ. There has been division within the camp. The consequence is, that, after the lapse of nearly two thousand years, even the *nominal* church is but a small minority of mankind!

Instead of proving instrumental to the salvation of the world, the church has sometimes threatened to consume it with the flames of strife that have burst forth from her own bosom. How many POLITICAL CONVULSIONS have agitated the earth, in consequence of the awful schisms of the church! When the veil of the temple was rent, there were 'earthquakes in divers places'; so the divisions

of the christian church have shaken kingdoms to their foundations, and overturned thrones. Professed Christians, as well as heathens, have had their ‘ sacred wars’; but these have only served to show how liable Christianity is to *desecration*, by being made subservient to error, ambition, and despotism: witness the commotions which sometimes attended the early corruptions and heresies: witness the Papal wars—the wars of the Reformation—and of the Commonwealth—and all the devastations which have been mixed up with the religion of Christ. For what nation of Europe has not been desolated by armies bearing the banner of the cross? What part of Christendom has not been stained with blood by some unholy crusade of schism?

But though the evil occasioned by this cause has been deeply felt on earth; there is a world, where the unhallowed triumphs of schism over charity will, it is to be feared, be more fully and awfully recorded in THE PERDITION OF SOULS! Who can doubt that he who ‘ searcheth the heart of man,’ fathoming all its depths and workings, sees that the schisms of professing Christians have prevented myriads of individuals from being added to Christ’s kingdom! Would not heaven have been at this moment more populous, but for the strife and the divisions of the church—which have enfeebled the moral power of Christianity, and

prevented its professors from combining to save mankind? And if a tear could bedim those eyes that gaze on the beatific vision, angels would surely weep to behold the spectacle of the mystical body of Christ torn and mangled with suicidal wounds, while the world is left to perish in its sin!

Eternity may not be too long to tell of the evil consequences of schism. They will, no doubt, hold a foremost place in the history of lost souls! So far as the salvation of men can be frustrated, the disunion and discord of the church are frustrating it. They are delaying the accomplishment of the promises of which the church is the depository; and which will not be fulfilled excepting in connexion with her united agency and prayers. Thus has the church, by means of her schisms, proved unfaithful to the commission of her Lord, to 'go and teach all nations' to observe his commands; and even though her increased activity should convey to the heathen, the Mahometan, and the Jew, the knowledge of these commands—how great the danger of their effect being neutralised by the inconsistency of her own example!

CHAPTER V.

THE SINFULNESS OF SCHISM.

AFTER what has already been advanced respecting schism, little examination is required further to illustrate its criminality. The guilt which may exist in particular cases, however, must be left with God and conscience ; for this may depend on circumstances, of which no other tribunal can take cognizance. Certain it is, those are to be found in the professing church, who appear to cherish no unkindly feelings towards classes of Christians from whom, nevertheless, their confined notions respecting the form and order of the church induce them to maintain entire separation. The *tendency* of the opinions and practices of some, is more schismatical than their dispositions ; though it should never be forgotten that we are as responsible to God for the former as for the latter :— of all these, God is the judge. The sinfulness, however, which strictly attaches to schism, is the sinfulness of an uncharitable mind, or a party spirit.

Schism, and all the tempers which are connected with it, are expressly CONDEMNED IN THE SCRIPTURES. We have already dwelt on the rebuke which the schisms of the Corinthians called forth from the apostle Paul. It has also been seen that the essence of these disorders consisted in uncharitableness; and we find the various forms and degrees of this evil disposition made a perpetual theme of warning in the New Testament; and solemnly forbidden, as being among the '*works of the flesh*,' and utterly opposed to the purity and benevolence of the Christian character. Such are 'evil-surmisings, envyings, contentions, railing, wraths, backbitings, whisperings, strife and vain-glory':—all 'hatred, malice, guile, and evil speakings: anger, clamour, variance, emulations, seditions (factious separations), 'heresies (party-divisions)', and the like. The passages to this effect are so numerous, as to form a very considerable part of the apostolical exhortations.

So far as schism prevails, it may be regarded as nothing less than REBELLION AGAINST CHRIST; since it violates the fundamental law of his kingdom, the law of 'love.' He who said 'Ye call me Master, and Lord; and ye say well, for 'so I am'; also declared: 'This is my commandment, that ye LOVE ONE ANOTHER.' 'By this shall all men know that ye are MY DISCIPLES, if ye have love one to another.' 'If a man love me, he will keep my

words.' Surely, the grand evidence of our allegiance to Christ as Head of the church, is wanting, if we are living in the habitual disregard of his 'new' and great commandment ! And it should be remembered that it is *character*, and not outward form, that constitutes a Christian : it is the moral image of Christ, which is always and everywhere the same—not modes and ceremonies, which change. Do we, then, desire to know *who* those are, whom we ought to hail as brethren ? Let St. Paul give the answer : ' Grace be with *all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.*' ' To as many as received him,' says St. John, ' to them gave he power to become the sons of God ; even to *them that believe on his name.*' If he who refuses to recognise those whom Christ has admitted into the heavenly family, were even ready, as a martyr, to give his ' body to be burned,' in order to uphold the ascendancy of some *form* of the church, in opposition to all other forms :—yet if he ' have not charity,' he is ' nothing.' Without this, his zeal is of the nature of treason against Christ ; whose language is : ' Why call ye me *Lord, Lord,* and do not the things which I say ?'

All indulgence of uncharitable tempers, also GRIEVES THE HOLY SPIRIT : for the doctrine of his influence is not a speculative dogma, but a solemn practical truth, demanding a corresponding con-

duct. The progress of personal religion depends on an intimate relation subsisting between the human soul and the Divine Spirit. He may be slighted and offended ; and no Christian in a right state of mind, can be indifferent to the consequences. He who ‘ walks in the Spirit,’ ‘ walks in light’ ; but if the Spirit be withdrawn, all is danger, sin, and misery. Now ‘ the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, gentleness, meekness.’ Therefore, to neglect the cultivation of these graces, is an immediate offence against their Divine Author. The spirit descended on Christ in the form of a *dove*, the emblem of affection and peace :—so is all malevolence opposed to his agency. Amidst the turbulence of unhallowed passions, he dwells not ; but retires far away from the scenes of wrath and strife.

The apostolic exhortation, ‘ not to grieve the Holy Spirit,’ is immediately connected with a caution against the indulgence of those tempers which are of the essence of all schism, whether occurring in particular societies, or between different christian communions : ‘ *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice : And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one*

*another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.** So far, therefore, as uncharitableness prevails, the evidence of the work of the Spirit on the heart is wanting; and 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.'

The absence of Christian love, is intimately ASSOCIATED WITH THE PREVALENCE OF SIN. Christ declared: '*Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*' This prediction originally related to the unfaithfulness of professed Christians to each other in time of persecution; when they should 'betray one another, and hate one another.' But the *principle* is applicable in all ages and circumstances. Nor is it difficult to perceive why *love* and *iniquity* should thus have been spoken of by our Saviour, as destructive of each other. A warm, holy, active affection for all who bear Christ's image, can emanate only from a regenerate heart, and a good conscience. Christians are described as 'loving one another with a pure heart, fervently.' As they 'love him that begat', they 'love him also that is begotten of him.' In proportion as they enjoy the 'light of God's countenance,' and the smile of an approving conscience—they cannot but feel the attraction of spirits kindred in love and holiness. To 'walk in the darkness' of sin, is to walk where charity is not. To 'walk in the light' of holiness, is to 'walk in

* Eph. iv. 30—32.

love': and when love shall prevail in the church universal—and not till then, will a flame be kindled which shall consume the iniquity of the world; and irradiate all the nations with the heavenly light of salvation.

Schism, furthermore, is closely related to the leading sin of PRIDE. This was the source of apostasy among angels: for the schism of heaven was a proud and daring rebellion against the authority of God. Pride and ambition had a large share in the first act of sin on earth; which was plucking of the tree that was 'to be desired to make one wise.' And the schisms of the church are conspicuously associated with the strivings of pride for mastery: for 'only by pride cometh contention.' The factions which arise in particular christian societies, may often be traced to a spirit too proud to yield, or to concede; and when the sections of the universal church are embroiled in strife, pride is commonly a strong ingredient in the cup of bitterness. Pride still aspires to be a divinity, 'knowing good and evil'; and the violent schismatic sometimes presumes to be the arbiter of all truth. He assumes the right to *pronounce* where revelation is silent—to give law to conscience, where apostles would have left it free—to condemn, where angels might applaud.

Hence, in its matured growth, schism may be regarded as A PRESUMPTUOUS SIN. The persecut-

ing schismatic goes so far as to usurp the sceptre of the great lawgiver of the church—to make *amendments* to his laws—to place human inventions on a level with divine commands—and to substitute temporal pains and penalties for the spiritual discipline of Christ ! The condemnatory schismatic, again, may sometimes be found, who would ‘ blot out of the Lamb’s book of life,’ the names of confessors, and martyrs, and self-denying apostolic missionaries, unless they be within his own pale. When the king of Moab said: ‘ Come curse me Jacob ; and come, defy Israel : ’ —even Balaam, the wicked prophet, replied: ‘ How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed ? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied ? ’ —but the spirit of schism, if it reach its full measure, may induce its possessor, like *him* in the Apocalypse, to ‘ blaspheme the tabernacle of God, and them that dwell in heaven’—to anathematize ‘ God’s elect’, and to condemn those whom he has ‘ justified’ ! In short, schism has sometimes exhibited itself in monstrous exhibitions of the christian profession ; which have been the more remarkable, as not distinguished by any striking deviation from the christian doctrine. Heresy may change the truth into ‘ *another* gospel ; which is *not* another’ ; but schism—the heresy of the heart, though found in connexion with the faith of Christianity, is an entire violation of

its spirit. The existence of such an anomaly within the precincts of the new creation, would be the more wonderful, were we not aware that moral evil was permitted to enter heaven itself; and that flagrant instances of departure from the temper of Jesus, among his avowed disciples, may have the effect of setting forth the lustre of genuine charity, by way of contrast; that, as we learn from the testimony of St. Paul, ‘they who are approved may be made manifest.’

In its worst forms, moreover, the schismatical temper, if we may judge by scripture-representations, would not seem free from all participation of the guilt of HYPOCRISY. ‘If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, HE IS A LIAR: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen; how can he love God whom he hath not seen?’ Love to God tends spontaneously to produce love to all those whose spirit and character are such as to prove that they also love him; and in feeling towards them as brethren, and cultivating this affection, we are obeying the divine injunction to ‘*put on charity*’ as the constant attire of the mind. But where is the evidence of our sincerity in professing to be *Christians*—that is, a class of people who are distinguished from others by their love to Christ, and to all who love him—if the moral features which constitute the Christian character, when beheld, have *in themselves* no attraction for

us ; but derive their interest from being set off by a party-dress?—if we *restrict* the divine command ‘ to love one another’ ; resembling the Pharisees, who maintained that the obligation to love our neighbour, was only an obligation to love the Jews?—That, through narrow-mindedness, mistake, a servile regard to traditionary antiquity, and other like causes, pious and *sincere* men may hold schismatical opinions, and pursue a conduct which tends to foster schism, is unquestionable :—but in the extreme forms and cases of schism, its leading trait is such as would seem condemned in scripture, as the mark of an unsound, insincere profession : ‘ If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth . . He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.’

Again, the spirit of disunion and schism often involves the sin of GROSS INJUSTICE TOWARDS GOOD MEN. I acknowledge a foreigner as a man and a brother of the human race, and have dealings with him, however he may differ from myself as to all that is external and adventitious : and shall I refuse to recognise as a Christian, one who is not of my communion, however upright his character—however apparently sincere his piety—however disinterested and self-denying his conduct—whatever temporal sacrifices he may be prepared to make for the sake of conscience, perhaps in reference to

the very points in which he differs from me? Shall I treat him with disdain or coldness—with rebuke or condemnation, because he has not drawn the same inferences from scripture, on matters which it has left indifferent or obscure? Is this to ‘walk charitably’ towards our brother, ‘for whom Christ died’? Shall we disown those who give evidence that Christ will acknowledge them before assembled worlds? Shall we regard as unworthy of our friendship such as we ourselves shall rejoice to be numbered with at the last day? and shall we account as aliens, or enemies, now, those with whom it will be our bliss to be found worthy to spend an eternity in heaven!

Even supposing that we ourselves are the party who have arrived at truth on the points in question; is it not unjust to act in an unbrotherly manner towards those whose errors cannot, on any principle of revelation, be proved to sever them from Christ—or necessarily to disparage the honor of religion in the world? Yet nothing is more common than for professing Christians to be almost wholly incapable of doing justice to each other, as to the feelings and motives with which they maintain their respective peculiarities. Prejudice so perverts the judgment, that they sometimes see little else than unmixed evil in each others modes and forms; nor, it may be, can they, without some effort, perceive much high

integrity of purpose existing beyond their own pale. Nay, it has often been evident that, to a party, catholic charity in any of its members, has appeared—not as a virtue, but rather as a fault, for which even a faithful adherence to the main tenets of the denomination could not atone!

Let us remember that by such attachment to a party as is schismatical in respect to the universal church—by our exclusiveness or prejudice—by our being only able to detect the ‘*mote* that is in our brother’s eye,’ and not to estimate aright his piety and excellence, however conspicuous, because he is not of our sect,—we may be doing grievous wrong to some of the best of men. For, as the celestial shower of blessing has descended on the moral wilderness, when it has been planted from other vineyards than our own; so in those vineyards have there been many of the ‘choicest vines’—‘trees of righteousness.’ The Spirit of God has not excluded from his selectest influences those whom their brethren would sometimes have excluded from their communion, by imposing human terms;—or would perhaps regard as having somewhat of shadow cast over their posthumous fame as Christians, because their memory has not come down to posterity embalmed in the odour of a certain sect. Let the Reformation tell of a noble army of confessors and martyrs, gathered from the various churches of Christendom. In later times,

let Episcopacy testify to the Ushers, the Beveridges, and the Leightons. Let Presbyterianism be honoured for the Rutherfords, the Guthries, and the Erskines. Let the English Nonconformists name once more their Howes and Baxters, their Owens and Jesseys. Let Whitefield and Wesley, and other eminently devoted men, who have been found in the various communities of the christian world, be added to the company of upright souls, in whom dwelt love to the Saviour and to all that bore his image. These sainted men were not the mere luminaries of a sect—they were lights to the world; and now, by the distance at which we view them from the local scenes to which they were once confined, their separate lustre appears blended into one united effulgence—a galaxy of glory—a celestial path of light, which points onward to the realms of love! What can be the state of *his* mind, who would unchristianize such men, and consign them to uncovenanted mercies, because they were not his churchmen? Happy spirits! could ye but now revisit the distracted church, what would be *your* testimony respecting its lamentable divisions!—what lessons would ye teach the church militant, on the subject of those external diversities, which ye have learned to estimate in the eternal light of love—and by the scale of heaven!

The injustice which is done by schism to the

claims and the characters of the wisest and the best of men, has been especially seen in the exclusive effects of those *systems* of the church, which have been most characterized by laws of uniformity. It may seem incredible—though it is true, that were an apostle to be raised from the dead ; and, unknown as such, to enter anew on the career of an evangelist, with all his spiritual attainments, but without the mighty signs and wonders of the first age—many christian assemblies would refuse to own him as a minister of Jesus Christ ! No elevation of piety—no sanctity of character—no zeal—no self-denial—no humility—no finished grace of resemblance to his Master, would secure him a welcome, unless he consented to appear as the minister of a party !—An apostle—an evangelist, in everything but the name and the miracles—neither of which can be essential to the man and the Christian—would be regarded as only in ‘pretended holy orders’ ; and would be excluded from thousands of pulpits !—Were even Christ to reappear in our world, as a *stranger*, and destitute of external glory, as he usually was on earth ;—not even all the beauty of perfect virtue and heavenly love, would conciliate the schismatic—should the Saviour, as without doubt he would, associate freely with the pious of every denomination ; own as his brethren all who supremely love God ; and refuse to acknowledge one particular section of Chris-

tians, as the ‘only true church.’—Have we ever reflected that all this would take place in England?—that neither the *piety* of St. Paul, nor of Jesus himself, would entitle either of them to be heard in the majority of our congregations!

It is a remark of the excellent Baxter, that ‘the sin of schism is commonly *justified*, and SELDOM REPENTED OF’;—an alarming consideration in the estimate of its guilt and danger: for the statement would seem to be too much borne out by the lamentable perpetuation of the schisms of the church, through lifetimes and generations. Uncharitableness is a spiritual sin, and like other sins which are closely allied to pride, it is not apt easily to revolt the conscience. The murderer, who starts at his own shadow, and sees a hand writing on the wall in blood, felt no remorse while revenge was rankling in his bosom, and he had not yet perpetrated the deed of horror. Yet the scriptures teach us the awful truth—that ‘he that hateth his brother is a murderer’! The schismatical spirit may be so indulged, as entirely to blunt the edge of all susceptibility to the greatness of the sin of cherishing uncharitable, and even malignant feelings, towards our brethren. This temper, in its most evil forms, impairs the function of conscience, by perverting the understanding—by obscuring the perceptions of justice—by embalming pride and wrath in the shrine of sanctity—and by

pleading fidelity to Christ and the church, as an excuse for persecuting some of the holiest men. Hence the danger lest this sin should so gain the ascendancy, as to close the avenues to repentance.

Finally : schism may be regarded as involving an ACCUMULATION OF SINFUL DISPOSITIONS. Here is evil-surmising, jealousy, hatred, and envy—the coldness of disdain—the loftiness of pride—the bitterness of contention, railing, and mutual recrimination—the biting and devouring of rage—the gall and venom of slander—the turbulence of anarchy—the oppression of despotism—the cruelty of persecution—the rejection of lawful authority—the assumption of unlawful power—the selfishness of covetousness, and of ambition—the hypocrisy of mere profession—the injustice of denying to others their due, or of exacting from them what there is no right to claim—the presumption of sitting in the judgment-seat of God ; or of making God a party to actions the most bigoted and tyrannical !

CHAPTER VI.

THE CURE OF SCHISM.

‘THE Cure of Schism!’ may the reader well exclaim—‘the apparently incurable disorder of the church’! And with all that is included in this exclamation the writer has so entirely and so painfully sympathized, that he could have desired to leave this part of the subject entirely to other hands more qualified to do it justice, had not the occasion seemed to call for some remarks. Schism is now so inveterate an evil; it has so identified itself with the institutions and the practices of Christians; and is so deeply blended with all that is proud, corrupt, and selfish in the human heart;—that the restoration of the church to unity and union, were it to take place to any considerable extent, would resemble the reduction of the earth to order and beauty, when it was without form and void; and would not less gloriously illustrate the power of the Divine Spirit, who

‘Dove-like sat brooding on the vast abyss,’

and gave light and harmony to its dark and jarring elements. The progress of such a reformation, would be the conversion of the professing church to Christianity. The completion of this work, whenever effected, will be a moral spectacle, on a par with the final conversion of the world!

The cure of schism will be the healing of the grand malady of the church; or of that complication of maladies which renders the church a mass of spiritual disease. It will be the cure of that disorder of the heart, which impedes the healthy flow, and the equal circulation of the vital tide of charity—the remedying of that moral blindness which confounds the proportions and relations of truth; causing what is vast, and of primary importance, and undisputed, to be comparatively overlooked; and magnifying into objects of the greatest moment, things which are secondary, or doubtful and obscure, and controverted among those who in all that is essential agree—it will be the staying of the plague of a fretting leprosy, which makes the sanctuary itself ‘unclean’—the purification of the atmosphere of the church from a desolating epidemic—her restoration from the paralysis of those moral energies which are essential to her usefulness—it will be the recovery of the body spiritual from a consumption which is wasting its vital powers; which substitutes for the health and the glow of charity, the hectic of angry con-

troversy and strife ; and reduces the spiritual life to a bare existence.

Unfavorable as appearances may be, we can no more doubt of the recovery of the church to love and union, than of the fulfilment of the promises respecting the heathen. These two grand events form one illustrious consummation. The world will be attracted to Christ by the spiritual glory of the church : ‘ Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people : all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.’ ‘ The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.’ We have reason to expect that the restoration of the church to unity and union, will be the result of the divine blessing on efforts made with an express view to this momentous object. The attention of good men must be extensively turned to the subject : it must engage their hearts—their meditations—their prayers—their conversation—their talents—their influence—their labours—their self-denial—their warm and hallowed zeal. Attempts must be made to expel all uncharitableness, and party exclusiveness, from their own minds—from the churches to which they belong—from the constitution of their several denominations.

SECTION I.

CURE OF SCHISM, MORE IMMEDIATELY IN CONNEXION
WITH PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS.

As the exercise of christian love wholly depends on the moral state of the mind, the cure of Schism demands serious attention to PERSONAL RELIGION. Can it be doubted that a fertile cause of the most flagrant and fatal schisms, is to be found in the amalgamation of men of the world with true Christians in the professing church? The corruption of christian discipline, may prove the opening of a flood-gate of mischief, deluging the sanctuary with men of secular character—men who have little of religion but the profession, and who consequently bring into the church the evil passions of the world. Thus may the church be only another name for the community at large, and there may be *no world*—not because the world has been converted to God; but because the church has been converted into the world; or so intimately blended with it, that the one can scarcely be distinguished from the other.

If the christian ministry, for example, be pur-

sued as a species of trade,—a speculation of profit or ambition: if it be regarded merely as a choice among the professions:—if, in short, *secular* motives have led to the adoption of an employment which, more than any other, demands visible superiority to the world;—can we wonder that the church should resemble the world in the display of all manner of unsanctified passions; and that real christian disinterestedness and love, should often be little known in the place which is their appropriate abode?—nay, that the very character of the church as a spiritual institution, should to a considerable extent be changed? For in proportion as men are found, under colour of the sacred profession, setting sail to all winds that promise to blow gain and advantage, the church is no longer a haven of spiritual peace, free from the restlessness of secularity; but a sea of worldly adventure.

If professing Christians have not ‘put on the new man,’—what wonder that schismatical tempers should prevail; and that ‘the old man with his deeds,’ ‘anger, wrath, malice,’ should be conspicuously manifested? The fruits of grace will never be found on the corrupt tree of unregenerate nature; and though it may stand in the garden of the Lord amidst trees of righteousness, it will still be barren; or prove as a Upas-tree in Paradise. Men who have joined the christian church for gain

or honor, being destitute of the sympathies peculiar to the spiritual life, have often originated, and have always fostered or exasperated, the unhappy dissensions of the sanctuary. And as an especial 'woe' has been pronounced by our Lord on those by whom '*offences*' come, it is well for all to consider how far the indulgence of a schismatical spirit, may not incur the awful weight of that woe: 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.'

Every one who professes to be a Christian, should make that visible unity on which Christ so strongly insisted, a special subject of private PRAYER. We should particularly seek, by this means, to expel uncharitableness from our own hearts—a sin from which few, if any, are wholly and at all times free. It is God that must retrace in the human soul the lost lineaments of love. Hence the need of applying to him who can sway the heart, and who has promised that 'He who asks shall receive.' What would not earnest prayer do, to correct a schismatical spirit! The unlovely tempers which belong to schism, could not exist in the realised presence of the God of love. The soul that communes much with heaven, will feel itself dissolved in holy affections towards the whole church, as well as to its glorious head.

The Christian in his closet, pouring forth his soul to his heavenly Father, beholding by faith the celestial vision, and feeling the sovereign influence of nearness to the throne of grace—is disarmed of all that is contrary to love; and though bigotted, as far as a good man can be, to his sect—yet surely at such a moment, when the spiritualities of religion, and its sublime and eternal objects, occupy his mind, he must lose the sectarian in the Christian! And would he not, *then*, if the opportunity were casually presented to him, follow the spontaneous dictate of his regenerate nature, and unreservedly own the divine image seen in some Christian of another name? would he not bow with him before God, in that privileged seclusion from the *church*, as well as from the world; and mingle his vows and prayers freely with those of one whose presence he may have shunned—whose sanctuary he has perhaps abhorred? would he not rush into the arms of his brother, and ask forgiveness of him, and of God, that he should have allowed those party associations which cleave to him in society, to interfere with the highest christian duty—with that bond which, by the Saviour's command, and by the law of all holy natures, is the uniting principle of the church in heaven and on earth! What Christian has not felt, that in his most devotional moments, he was least under

the influence of party spirit? And what are those principles and feelings, which will not abide the test of a spiritual state of mind—such as that, in which the Christian would desire death to find him, and eternity to receive him!

The STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES, also, with devout anxiety to imbibe more of the spirit which they breathe, would tend effectually to counteract those tempers, which are of the essence of schism; and to imbue the mind with sentiments of genuine charity, fresh from the pure fountain of truth. It is to be lamented that Christians have often appeared content to derive their practical ideas of the religion of Christ from the character and complexion which it exhibits in their own party, instead of contemplating it in the clear light of revelation. Hence may arise partial and imperfect, and sometimes perverted conceptions of Christianity, far inferior to what might be attained; as objects are seen tinged, when viewed through a coloured medium, or distorted when reflected by a faulty mirror. The result may easily be, that we acquire the spirit of Christianity, only so far as it is the spirit of our denomination, or of our particular circle; and appear rather as the followers of some one man, or the adherents of some one society, or religious party, than as Christians. Thus charity is confined;—and is sometimes

changed into a secret—or perhaps even an avowed hostility !

How greatly would christian love be promoted, by a careful and devotional study of the temper of Jesus ! Let us never suppose that we have attained to what is worthy to be called an imitation of his example, or have made any real progress in curing the schismatical tendencies of our own hearts, till we have learned to endeavour to ‘overcome evil with good.’ It is very *natural*, indeed, that the conduct of others towards *us*, should find its reflection in our conduct towards *them* :—but though natural, it is far from christian ; and had not nature so commonly prevailed over piety, a thousand schisms, both private and public, which have disgraced Christianity, would never have existed ; or would have perished in their infancy. Our blessed Redeemer taught his disciple, both by precept and example, to return love for enmity, blessing for cursing, good for evil, prayer for persecution.

It should be remembered, too, that the schismatical conduct of many good men is founded on misconception. This will never be remedied by any means that are not adapted to convince the judgment, and to soften prejudice. Nor, according to the laws of Christ, will *worse* causes of dissension justify a corresponding return of evil

dispositions; however they may palliate it in the judgment of man. ‘What glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.’

How much like their Divine Master, also, in their exemplification of christian love, were the apostles! who could say to the churches: ‘We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children.’ How exquisite their delineations of that charity which ‘suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth (covereth) all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things’! In this finished picture of charity, we perceive a perfect contrast to the odious image of schism. The graces and the loveliness of charity, bespeak her heaven-born; but schism is a hydra, whose shape and attributes denote an infernal origin; and every manifestation of this many-headed monster, is the opposite

of some revelation of love. For in schism we see intolerance, cruelty, envy, boasting, pride, selfishness, passion, suspicion, malignity, injustice, resentment, and all uncharitableness. Would the disciple of Christ avoid fostering so great a pest in the church as schism ; and would he cherish divine charity ? let him carefully study those numerous passages of scripture which treat of the christian temper—and let him thus strive to bring his mind into devout and habitual contact with the mind of the Divine Spirit.

THE EXAMPLE OF MEN EMINENT FOR PIETY AND CATHOLIC CHARITY, in various ages of the church, cannot be contemplated without advantage, and may also tend to aid the cure of schism. Let Christians then read their lives and writings with this view. The circumstance that such men have belonged to different denominations, is a powerful appeal against bigotry: the fact of their supreme devotedness to the *grand objects* of Christianity, may exhibit, by way of contrast, the littleness of a party-spirit ; and their desire to promote brotherly love among all the faithful in Christ, may well awaken sympathy and imitation. Were all Christians like the heavenly Leighton, or the amiable and pious Doddridge, the flame of schism would expire in the universal church, for want of fuel. We may learn a lesson even from those who were too near the times of Romish domination, to

comprehend the whole doctrine of religious liberty, when, with Calvin, they exclaim: ‘ I should not hesitate to cross ten seas, if by this means holy communion might prevail among the members of Christ’ !¹ Similar appear to have been the feelings of Bucer, Peter Martyr, Knox, and many more reformers.² Even Joseph Hall, when at Dordt, forgot his *jus divinum* Episcopacy; and in his sermon addressed Presbyterians as ‘ a most holy assembly of the prophets’; saluted the Dutch church as the ‘ pure spouse of Christ’; reprobated party-names; and exclaimed, ‘ We are Christians; let us also be of one soul. We are one body, let us also be of one mind. Aim at peace, brethren: enter into peace; that laying aside all prejudice, party-spirit, and evil affections, we may all come to a happy agreement in the same truth’ !³ Beautiful exhibition of charity! why should it not be universally imitated? Of such instances, happily, no denomination is destitute of *some* examples:—let Christians make these examples their own!

THE CULTIVATION OF THE SPIRIT OF BROTHERLY LOVE as a vital principle of Christianity in the heart, will tend to destroy schism in its original source. For though schism is the ‘ pestilence

¹ Calvin. Epist. p. 64.

² See Mason’s Catholick Communion, 1816. p. 178.

³ Act. Synod. Dordrecht. Sess. xvi.

and blasting', the 'mildew' and the 'locust' of the *church*—every Christian must look well to the healing of the mischief as the 'plague of his own heart.' Charity, alive and vigorous in many minds, would prove a diffusive principle of life and health to the church. For every one whose heart is the abode of love, and whose conversation is peaceable and brotherly, is in himself a perpetual rebuke to schism, and a living witness for unity, among all with whom he associates. As genuine Christians are all children of the same parent—'born of the' same 'spirit'; they may surely be expected to banish from their minds all feelings which are contrary to fraternal union; and to frame their conduct towards each other according to the apostolical exhortation: 'Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.'

Even where any may err in the matter of charity itself, let charity still be the interpreter of their conduct. Let due allowance be made for varieties of mental character, of natural disposition, of acquired knowledge—above all, of education and training, of association and habit. Some good men—may act towards other Christians more *exclusively* than they would desire to do—in consequence of the trammels of the system to which they may be pledged:—trammels which they do not see how they can break through, unless they

depart from what appears to them to be the path of duty. Others may, with a high-toned conscientiousness, have unequivocally sacrificed self-interest to conviction. Let us not be ready to judge the *former*, if, in consequence of their not possessing our liberty of action, they cannot go *all* our lengths in free christian association:—and let us not make the *latter* offenders for a word, if they should occasionally allow a strong expression to escape them, with regard to what they deem abuses in religion. The more fully conscious we are of the rectitude of our own course, the more candidly may we afford to listen to the reasonings of those who differ from us. And before we cast a stone at them, let us be quite sure that in forming our own religious connexion, we ourselves have been guided by a regard to the will of God, as deliberate, pains-taking, self-denying, and conscientious, as they may have evinced.

In order to prevent schisms in our immediate circle, let us ‘think on whatsoever things are lovely.’ Let Christians be marked by a kind and inoffensive behaviour; and not withhold from each other such personal proofs of brotherly love, as are within their power. Let them discountenance any attempts that may be made to disparage and injure each others reputation, by any of the forms of backbiting and slander. Let them be slow to receive reports to each others prejudice; holding

sacred the characters of their brethren, and careful, as far as possible, neither to give nor to take offence. It is certain that these, and all other fruits of charity, would signally attend any remarkable revival of personal religion. A large effusion of the Spirit would, as the natural result, greatly augment love among Christians, and render it spontaneous. If the professors of Christianity are not spiritual men—men of prayer and meditation, they will be worldly, covetous, or high-minded; they will be of the earth, and will cherish earthly affections, the elements of disunion and discord. But the tendency of exalted piety, and entire consecration to the service of God, is to elevate the minds of Christians into a spiritual region, above the storms of strife; where they freely unite, by the attraction of regenerate natures, emancipated from the predominant influence of the world. Hence the most spiritually-minded men are wont to be the most candid, peaceable, and brotherly.

SECTION II.

THE CURE OF SCHISM, AS RELATES TO THE EXISTING POSITION OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS.

It has already been seen that certain religious diversities which prevailed in the infant church,

were not treated by the apostles as incompatible with christian love and unity. The bare circumstance, therefore, of *terms* being employed simply for the purpose of distinguishing those who differ in points non-essential, cannot, in itself, involve schism. Hence the conclusion at which we arrived, that denominational names and practices *may* exist without that uncharitableness which is the prime characteristic of a schismatical spirit.

Yet it must be allowed that denominational Christianity, is no slight mark of the infirmity of the church; and of the loss of its ancient spirit, in consequence of its progressive degeneracy for more than a thousand years. Of apostolical Christianity, unity was the prominent feature: so that even *Jewish* and *Gentile* converts, discordant as were their habits and associations, were not formed into separate communions; but were instructed to hold their mutual differences as private opinions, in the spirit of the gospel—making every possible sacrifice to love. Modern Christianity, on the contrary, has been marked by endless separations; and the divisions of the church have resembled the Nomes of ancient Egypt, with religious observances abhorrent from each other, rather than the lovely picture of harmony and unity delineated by Christ and the apostles. Christian ministers have been no longer, as in primitive times, ministers of the universal

church—but only of a sect ; one being often considered as no more qualified for a brotherly participation in the public functions of another, than the priest of Ammon at Thebes was held admissible to officiate in the temple of the sun at Heliopolis ! That this state of things may be rendered by Providence the occasion of good, indeed, cannot be doubted ; since even the introduction of moral evil into the universe, is made subservient to the ends of Infinite Wisdom. The *tendency* of denominational distinctions in Christianity, however, is evidently schismatical, rather than conducive to unity. For though this kind of separation may undoubtedly be found apart from schism, (that is, uncharitable division,) it affords a wide inlet by which the mischiefs of schism may find an entrance.

Let us then CONTEMPLATE THE EXISTING DISUNITED STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, as contrasted with its apostolic unity. It would be a difficult task even to attempt the enumeration of the various sects, subdivisions, and complex relations, which have marked the separation of professing Christians. Instead of the ‘church of God at Corinth,’ or the ‘churches of Galatia,’ and the like mere local distinctions ; we hear of Lutherans and Calvinists, Churchmen and Dissenters, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Wesleyans, and an endless succession of party-

names ; of which a large proportion have been derived from some human leader. Whatever may be said of this state of things being unavoidable, and such as might have been anticipated from the infirmity of man ;—it is unquestionably a great evil. Nor will the reflective Christian, contemplating the denominational and divided condition of the church, fail to be reminded of the language of the apostle : ‘ While one saith, I am of Paul ; and another, I am of Apollos ; are ye not carnal ?’

It was worthy of the great champion of the Reformation to say : ‘ I beg that men would abstain from using my name ; and would call themselves—not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther ? Why should it happen to me, poor corruptible food for worms, that the disciples of Christ should be called after my abominable name ? Be it not so, beloved brethren ! but let us extirpate party names, and be called Christians ; for it is the doctrine of Christ that we teach.’* Apostolic words ! worthy of Paul ! Happy had it been, if the churches of the Reformation had set an example of this spirit to the christian world ! But while, with few exceptions, the Protestant communities, in their public documents, have agreed as to the grand elements of Christianity, they have differed and separated on points which, as the ma-

* Ap. American Biblical Repository ; vol. xi. p. 365.

jority of each denomination have allowed, do not immediately affect salvation. Some of these questions are left in scripture indeterminate, or obscure : others depend on a considerable process of reasoning, in which the difference of capacity and habit may cause sincere diversity : some are rather speculative than practical, and border closely on what is incomprehensible to man :—all are of such a nature, that an error in opinion or practice on these points, if it be held with a pure conscience, cannot reasonably be regarded in the same light as a rejection of those truths and precepts, which, by the common consent of the bulk of Protestant churches, are acknowledged as indispensable elements in man's redemption and restoration to God.

It may still, perhaps, be urged that to suppose the history of religion would have taken a different course, were to look for perfection from human nature ; and to dream of a utopian state of the church, not to be expected in a scene of moral evil, and intellectual error. Easy, however, as it is to account for the disorders of the past, and little as they are matter of wonder when we consider what man is—it should be remembered that the christian church has now had the *experience* of nearly two thousand years. She is not a novice in the knowledge of her dangers ; and having been tossed so long on the turbulent sea of

strife, and so often shipwrecked through her own folly—so as to have hitherto failed in the high commission to subdue to her Lord the continents and islands of the earth—may she not be supposed, by this time, to have learned some wisdom from the painful past ? and may we not hope that while society is advancing in civilisation and in knowledge—while pacific principles appear to be making their way in states and cabinets, and all things are tending onward,—the church will not be left behind in the career of improvement ; but will aspire at length to that amelioration of her state, of which a disposition to return to her first love, and to desire at least some nearer approach towards her long-lost unity, will be the harbinger !

The present sectarian divisions have arisen partly from choice—partly from the accidental course of circumstances—partly from the necessity often entailed by an alternative of evils involved in the errors and infirmities of human nature—sometimes from its wickedness and tyranny under the mask of religion. Denominational distinction is a cherished characteristic of the christian world ; and it may take ages more to wear away. Few appear to deplore it, great as have been the resulting evils. For who can doubt that the mere partition of the church, as exhibited in not fewer than a hundred discrepant and party-names, has greatly lowered the dignity of Christianity ; and

has furnished the scoffing infidel with an opportunity of pointing at what has too much resembled a caricature of the *exoteric* doctrine of the unity of Christians? while the sober sceptic, overlooking the extensive uniformity of *essential* belief which exists amidst so much diversity, has secretly encouraged himself in the impression that religion, as distinguished from a certain conventional morality, is a *mere opinion*! How frequently, from the same cause, have the grand interests of christian unity been merged in those of party! Religious zeal has thus often become the rivalry of sects striving to occupy the same sphere; and building on each others foundation, rather than attempting to break up new ground, and to redeem the wilderness.

In this, and in other ways, the denominational distinctions of the church have often tended to increase the impediments with which Christianity has to contend, in consequence of its working being necessarily connected with pecuniary considerations. The appeals to infirmity of motive are thus multiplied; the credit and influence, and even the livelihood of many, are made to depend on their holding with tenacity tenets non-essential to Christianity, but to the party essential; and a stronger bond of union is created, than the great truths and interests of the common salvation. Relaxation of devotedness to the peculiarities of the

denomination, is apt to produce suspicion; and a sincere change of sentiment on some minor point, may not only deprive the Christian of his existing religious connexion—but possibly disqualify him from being received into any other. Hence supernumerary temptations to insincerity and bigotry—or at least to search the scriptures for arguments to uphold the views of the party, rather than for the unbiassed investigation of truth. The party is gratified when its members display zeal for its distinctive peculiarities; and some of its adherents feel that they are expected to be its champions. By this means, the impartial pursuit of truth is checked; and the pure and upright love to it for its *own* sake, is more or less endangered. Moreover, the habit which has been thus acquired of magnifying party distinctions, obscures the perception of motives; and often renders it easy for the individual to confound prejudice and prepossession, with conscience. Meantime, the moral and religious interests of society are sacrificed. Instead of being the ‘salt of the earth,’ Christians are occupied in contending for the ascendancy of their respective sects. Thus the scripture-education of a nation may be impeded, as has been the case in our own—artificial jealousies may arise between missionaries on a foreign shore—and difficulties may occur in the translation of the Bible into heathen tongues, because Christians will con-

tend for denominational interpretations, instead of more liberally following the precedent of many versions to the contrary.

In short, whether we consider the internal or external relations of the church of Christ, we perceive that its advantages for possessing a calm and deeply-seated piety, and for influencing mankind, are greatly diminished by its avowed party distinctions. For whatever may be said of that activity which is generated by enlisting human passions and rivalships on the side of Christianity, certain it is that the moral health and power of the church extensively consist in its unity and union. Thus the most glorious period of Christianity was that which comprehended the first two centuries—previously to the rise of sectarian divisions among those who maintained the genuine faith; and while opinions and practices were held as private differences, which the genius of modern times would render denominational. Unfavorable, however, as the tendency of these broadly-marked distinctions has been to the manifest unity of Christians, even the present regulations of churches would admit of an incalculable advance in the fraternal spirit, as compared with what is now witnessed among orthodox Protestants.

Hence, the importance of attempting to ameliorate the schismatical condition of the church, by

PROMOTING BROTHERLY UNION BETWEEN CHRISTIANS OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS, AS FAR AS THE EXISTING CONSTITUTIONS OF CHURCHES WILL ALLOW. That in some quarters these constitutions present formidable difficulties, is certain: yet by the fraternal intercourse, and co-operation in religious objects, which have already subsisted to a partial extent; and the devotional, ministerial, and sacramental communion, which facts have shown to be practicable between most of the denominations;—it is proved that the immediate obstacle to greater union, lies in the want of a more christian spirit in individuals. A signal increase of charity, would do much towards breaking down the artificial barriers which bigotry and worldly policy have erected against christian unity:—nay, it would tend, ultimately, to diminish the number of parties, by promoting a disposition as far as practicable to coalesce.

It has already been remarked, that, in our own country, ministerial communion exists between Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Wesleyans, and Moravians; and that Seceders, and English Dissenters, have preached in the Scottish establishment; while ministers of the Kirk have been found in the pulpits of the Secession, and of Dissent. Sermons are also frequently delivered in the German Lutheran church, by English Dissenters; and both Lutheran and Reformed

ministers would find ready admission into the pulpits of any of the above denominations. The Church of England, *alone*, prohibits her clergy from participating in this mutual recognition; and from thus practically saying to the rest, ‘I am thy fellow servant.’—How long will good men consent to withhold from the world the demonstration, that all the ministers of Christ are one!

Several of those great societies which have distinguished our times, and whose common object is the conversion of mankind to God, deserve to be hailed as eminent blessings to the world, were it only for their tendency to soften down sectarian prejudices, and to bring pious men of different communions nearer together. That in many instances this effect has been produced, cannot be doubted; though, within these last few years, the relative position of religious parties has, unhappily, proved a serious check to the progress of union in good works;—religious differences having become more identified than before, with political strife; and the result having been that many who seemed prepared to join in catholic objects, have refrained; and many have allowed themselves to forget their former love to the universal church, and have walked no more with their brethren of other denominations.

One of the most remarkable of the institutions referred to, is the LONDON MISSION-

ARY SOCIETY, formed in 1795. This noble project was founded on the principle, that denominational questions should form no part of its economy ; its missionaries not being restricted to any one form of ecclesiastical polity. Difficult to be carried out as this part of the plan might seem, the pledge would appear to have been redeemed. ‘ After twenty years’ connexion with the London Missionary Society,’ says one of its most apostolical and philanthropic agents, ‘ I have never known its fundamental principle violated. I have never received any communication, either directly or indirectly, as to the mode of church-government I should adopt ; nor am I aware that any of my coadjutors have. The only charge given me by the directors of this society was, to make known the way of salvation, as consummated by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.’* Surely the signal achievements of this catholic institution, may well cause those who imagine that the blessing of God is limited to an exclusive system of the church to pause, and to revise their principles !

It was made a feature in the constitution of this Society, that one of the annual sermons should be preached in some church of the Establishment ; where, by worshipping with the

* Williams’s Narrative of Missionary Enterprises in the South Sea Islands. 1837. Preface.

Churchman, the Dissenter might show that difference in modes should be no obstacle, on his part, to all practicable union in promoting the grand objects of the gospel. At the close of the anniversary meetings, a sacramental service was instituted, to be held in places of worship where every one might sit or kneel in receiving the eucharist, according to his sense of duty; where the lay Churchman, at least, might, with others, evince his catholic spirit; and where christian brethren of every name, might unite in commemorating the death of Him, whose church is 'one body'; and who has redeemed mankind 'out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.' Truly such a union must be regarded as in harmony with the principles of the religion of Christ!—a union in which Paul, surely, would have joined; who declared: 'Unto the Jews, I became a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: to the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak. . . And this I do for the gospel's sake.' Had such a scene been witnessed on the grand scale, (for the desired union of parties has not been thus realised, though eminent success has attended the Society,) could the church on earth have afforded a spectacle more interesting or edifying?—more adapted to enlarge the heart, and to awaken such feelings as a Christian might wish to die possessing?—the spectacle of

those who claim to love the Saviour, shewing that they cherish mutual love ; sacrificing at the foot of the cross all party distinctions, for his and for each others sakes—‘ ALL ONE ’—‘ THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW ’, ‘ THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE,’ that the Father hath sent the Son to redeem it ! Would it not be difficult for a *good man*, whatever his denomination, to be present at such a scene, and not to catch the sacred contagion of brotherly love ! Surely piety must for once, at least, predominate over prejudice !—nor could bigotry breathe freely in such an atmosphere ! Surely the man of a party must for once forget *his church*, in the church universal, and her combined efforts for the world’s salvation !—and refrain no longer from uniting with Christians of other names, and modes, and forms, in the devout aspiration,

‘ Waft, waft ye winds the story,
And you ye waters roll ;
Till like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole :
Till o’er our ransom’d nature
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss return to reign !’

That the church of Christ will one day exhibit such a spirit of unity, and of union in the works of love, can no more be doubted than that Chris-

tianity is destined to triumph over all the littleness, pride, and prejudice of human nature; or that the church is to be the representative of Christ, in saving the world! When such scenes shall be witnessed, the world will no longer scoff at the church for her inconsistency in professing to be *one*, while her house is 'divided against itself'; but will be constrained to acknowledge: 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob; and thy tabernacles, O Israel!' 'And many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.' 'O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord!'

It is strange that efforts to promote union among Christians, should not commend themselves to the judgment and the heart of every disciple of Christ! Examples to the contrary, however, might be found, which prove that something more than the removal of those barriers which most Established Churches have reared against unity is required, before the sectarian disease of the church can be soundly healed. A late eminent Scottish Seceder complains that 'the world has for some time beheld the spectacle'—of what?—what sad scene in the too melancholy history of the church

are we called on to contemplate? Is it the spectacle of professing Christians maintaining mutual distance, and alienation of heart?—Christians engaged in unholy strife?—Christians excommunicating and anathematizing each other?—Christians contradicting their divine Master in the face of the world, by letting ‘all men know’ that they do *not* ‘love one another’?—Far different is the spectacle over which we are invited to lament—it is the identical spectacle which has been alluded to, of ‘Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Methodists, and Seceders, annually together at the Lord’s table.’ ‘And all this,’ it is added, ‘is cried up as a proof of liberality, and a mind that has freed itself from the trammels of party!’*

Yes—‘the trammels of party’! Had not these trammels too often proved of greater force than charity—the fundamental law of Christ’s kingdom—few good men would have been found taking *such* a view of such a scene; and a more general desire would have been manifested for brotherly union, to the utmost that the existing denominational state of the church will allow, among all who hold the ‘*doctrine of Christ*’; conscience always being held inviolate on all sides; and the only sacrifice required being that of prejudice or indifference, private feeling or party ascendancy. That such a

* M’Crie On the Unity of the Church. 1821. p. 95.

sacrifice may frequently be a great demand to make from human nature, is granted :—but is not the demand that a man shall be a *Christian*, a great demand? and may we not expect from man *as* professedly christian, what we cannot expect from him as man? How greatly have other causes than *conscience* enlightened by a devout and intelligent search for truth, contributed to keep Christians aloof from each other! Hence it is that the church of Christ has been doomed by her leaders to be a slave to non-essentials; and having lost her freedom, and her charity, she has lost her glory! The spirit of division characterized the decline of the golden age of her original purity; and the Reformation—the morning of her second birth, which would have appeared to promise a return of her ancient unity, was early overcast with the clouds of sectarianism and strife; which so thickened upon her, that, at length, become familiarised to the darkness, she has seemed to feel it more congenial than the light of love; for she has preferred party-divisions to a catholic unity, based on the apostolical principle of mutual concession. These divisions have become consecrated by time; and have sometimes been as jealously cherished as though they were a point of honor: so that even where the materials have existed of such a union as would not have interfered with the peculiarities of denomination—

these materials have been neglected ; and the repulsion of party has prevailed over the attraction of the common Christianity.

Let Christians *reflect that the divisions of the church, as they have commonly been maintained, are a departure from the genuine spirit of the Reformation.* The rise and progress of this grand event, were strongly marked by public recognitions of the momentous principle, that the church, though diverse as to minor points, ought to be *manifestly one*, in affection and in union. Ill as the true doctrine of religious freedom, and mutual tolerance, was understood and practised by those who had but just escaped the bondage of Rome ; there is a remarkable coincidence in the testimony which may be gathered from the Reformers, and from the Confessions of the churches which they planted, that the unity of Christians ought to be regarded as independent of differences in external form and custom, or in subordinate articles of faith. This was at least the *theory* of reformed Christendom ; and though the attempts that were made to reduce this theory to practice, were often far from being consistent with it ; yet the *principle* avowed was the homage which truth, when first delivered from the prison-house of error, paid to her Divine Master, and to his ‘ new command.’ To study and compare the testimonies which the spirit of the Reformation gave to the unity of the

church, might aid to cherish the desire of promoting all practicable union. Even to glance at some of these testimonies may not be without its use ; as it may suffice to show that the spontaneous tendency of the church, when she arose from the grave of Romish corruption, was to a life of brotherly love ; though infirmity, and worldly influences, so soon produced the bitter fruits of schism.

In 1529, a friendly conference was held at Marburg, between LUTHER and MELANCTHON on the one side, and ZUINGLIUS and OECOLAMPADIUS on the other ; with a view to promote an adjustment of their differences. The result was an agreement in thirteen articles, embracing the most important points of faith. A fourteenth article declared, that although the German and Swiss Reformers could not come to one mind as to the *presence* in the eucharist, they would nevertheless maintain brotherly love towards each other.

LUTHER remarks, in the preface which he wrote to the Bohoemic Confession : ‘ We (the churches of the Reformation) ought to give the greatest possible thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and to congratulate both them (the Waldenses) and ourselves, that we, who were far apart, are now, by the annihilation of the suspicious distance that was between us, by which we appeared to each other as heretics,

brought near together, and gathered into one fold, under one shepherd and bishop of souls, who is blessed for ever, amen ! . . . Let us remember that all the rights and observances of all churches never have been, or could be, uniform and alike. For the circumstances and varieties of men, of places, and of times, do not permit it: only let the doctrine of faith and morals be preserved, for this ought to be the same; as Paul often admonishes. *Speak all the same thing*, saith he. Again: *That ye may with one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*'¹ MELANCTHON, in a letter to the Waldenses of Bohemia, says: 'As we agree respecting the chief articles of christian doctrine, let us embrace each other with mutual love. Nor ought dissimilitude and variety of rites and ceremonies to disunite our affections.'² CALVIN subscribed to the Augustan or Lutheran confession;³ and in writing to FARELL, he states that the peculiarities of the Lutheran church were no just causes of disunion between it and the Reformed.⁴ In short, Henry Alting, professor of divinity at Heidelberg, who was present at the synod of Dordt in 1618, informs us that it was the common opinion of the Reformed divines, that Calvinists might receive the commu-

¹ Syntagma Confessionum Præf. ad Conf. Bohoem.

² Ibid. ³ Epist. Schalingio.

⁴ Epist. Farello.

nion with Lutherans. He adds that this was the sentiment of CAPITO, BUCER, CALVIN, PETER MARTYR, ZANCHY, URSIN, TOSSANUS, PARÆUS SCULTETUS, and others ; some of whom united in the Lord's Supper with the Lutheran church, as occasion offered.¹

KNOX, the Scottish Presbyterian Reformer, showed his moderation by officiating to a congregation of Episcopalian English exiles at Frankfort ; among whom a modified form of divine worship was agreed on—some things being taken from the liturgy of the Church of England,² others from the practice of Geneva. It was also of the genius of the *English* Reformation, from WICLIFFE downwards, to cherish a catholic spirit ; which mere differences in external forms and appointments were not accounted sufficient to interrupt. At the request of CRANMER, Calvin gave his advice to the Protector Somerset, and to Edward VI., as to the best mode of promoting the Reformation in England ; and the archbishop employed Knox to preach in this country, in aid of the great work. The doctrine that a hierarchy, and a liturgy, and episcopal ordination, were *essential* to the ministry and the church, was a figment which the first English Reformers left the Romish Church to dream of, in her dotage,

¹ Bayle's Dict.—Alting. Theolog. Probl. P. ii. Pr. 18.

² See M'Crie's Life of Knox. Period iv.

and in the humiliation of her pride; and they gladly hailed the Reformers and the members of the reformed churches abroad, as their brethren.*

If we look into the *Syntagma Confessionum*, we shall find that these churches treated government, form of worship, and the like points, as things indifferent—subjects of mutual forbearance, and by no means lawful causes for disunion among Christians. To adduce examples: in the AUGUSTAN Confession, recognised as containing the LUTHERAN faith, it is stated, that the ‘church properly so called, has for its signs, the pure and sound doctrine of the gospel, and the right use of the sacraments;’ and that agreement in these is sufficient for unity. The BELGIC Confession uses nearly the same terms. The BOHEMIC speaks of peculiarities in ‘the external form and mode of the church’, as mere secondary matters: ‘Rites and ceremonies, in which the churches differ, we think of no consequence. Ceremonies change: faith, Christ, the word—change not. There-

* Calvin. Epist. et Respons. Hanov. 1597. pp. 179, 245, 248.—Strype’s Cranmer, p. 413.

‘If they had not been restrained, they would have brought the government and worship of the Church of England nearly to the pattern of the other Reformed Churches. If the reader doubts this, he may consult the evidence produced in the notes.’—M’Crie’s Life of Knox, 1818. vol. i. p. 107; also note R, p. 386—397.

fore variety in ceremonies, if they are not opposed to the word of God, neither injures Christianity, nor separates from the church.' The HELVETIC confession states that 'the truth and the unity of the church consist, not in ceremonies and external rites, but rather in the truth and unity of the Catholic faith. Hence, we read that, among the ancients, there was a manifold diversity of rites; these being matter of freedom, by which no one ever imagined that the unity of the church was dissolved . . In faith and doctrine our churches agree; though we have different rites in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and in some other things: nor is the unity and union of our churches by this means divided. We do not, by a wicked schism, separate and break fellowship with the holy churches of Christ in *Germany, France, England*, or other nations of the christian world.' The Confession in which these and similar catholic sentiments occur, was addressed by the Swiss churches, to Christians throughout Europe; and we are informed in the Preface, that 'the English, Scotch, French, and Belgic — and many Polish, Hungarian, and German churches, approved the same.' Here was something approaching to a formal recognition of each others claims as Christians and as churches, between Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and those whose ecclesiasti-

cal polity was different from that of both.* The spirit of such mutual admissions, had it been generally exemplified in practice, would have led to results far different from the compulsory uniformity which followed in the train of the Reformation.

One of the most redeeming examples of unity which relieve the latter part of the 16th century, and the early departure of the Protestant church from the genuine spirit of Christianity, is to be found in the 'POLISH AGREEMENT,' (*Poloniæ Consensus*), at the Synod of Sendomir, in 1570; when the Lutheran, the Swiss or Calvinistic, and the Waldensian churches, in Poland, formed themselves into one Confederation, for the avowed purpose of effectually silencing those strifes and distractions among the orthodox, which, it is justly stated, are so grievous a stumbling block to the pious, and a source of triumph to the enemies of Christianity. It was therefore proposed to 'cultivate and to seal a cordial union, by hearing the word and using the sacraments in each others sanctuaries; regular order, according to the discipline and usage of each denomination respectively, being still observed. For it is of little moment what rites and ceremonies are employed, provided the fundamental doc-

* See the Augustan, Bohoemic, Helvetic, and other Confessions in the *Corpus et Syntagma Confessionum*. Genev. 1654.

trine of our faith and salvation be preserved entire and incorrupt.' The 'Agreement' was practically ratified on the Lord's day, by those of the Bohoemic Confession attending morning service in the Lutheran churches; on which occasion, Waldensian ministers preached. In the afternoon, those of the Augsburg Confession proceeded to the Bohemian churches, and were addressed by two Lutherans. These truly fraternal assemblies were marked by earnest prayer to God; and strong demonstrations of joy broke forth on all sides, even to 'acclamation.' And now 'all being formed into one church, sung with united voice that hymn of exultation and thanksgiving: 'We praise thee O God!'¹ This 'Agreement' was subsequently confirmed at several other places in Poland and Hungary, and continued valid for the space of more than sixty years. At Cracow, the ministers and people of the confederate communions, 'in a sacred assembly, partook of the body and blood of the Lord, together, according to the rites of the church at that place.' Afterwards, at Petrikow, it was agreed that any congregation of the Lutheran, Helvetic, or Bohoemic Confession, might invite a minister to settle with them from either of the others.²

We learn from a letter of Calvin to Cranmer, that it was the earnest desire of the Genevan Re-

¹ Corpus et Syntag. Conf. Pt. ii.

² Ibid.

former, that the most catholic union should subsist among *all* the churches of the Reformation, 'on scriptural principles'; notwithstanding the diversity which prevailed on subordinate points.* Several movements towards this object were made, at intervals, both in Germany and France, during the century of the Reformation, and in subsequent years. An assembly was held at Frankfort, in 1577, consisting of many representatives from various churches, who agreed to invite all the Lutherans and the Reformed to join in a common bond of union; and none entered more warmly into this truly christian design, than the churches of France, still bleeding with the wounds inflicted by war and persecution. Again, in 1614, at the General Synod held at Tonneins, a plan of union was proposed which was to allow each of the churches to retain its independence and its own order. They were to agree to avoid the questions existing between the Lutherans and the Reformed: also the Arminian controversy, then agitating the churches of Holland. A common confession of faith was to be framed, out of the existing confessions of the churches of England, Scotland, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the Palatinate, and others; those points being omitted which are 'not essential to salvation'; and, among the rest, 'ceremonies and church-government';

* Calvin. Epist. p. 64.

for it is alleged that ‘ difference on these subjects does not prevent agreement in faith and doctrine.’ It was a part of the plan that at the close of the assemblies to be held on this occasion, all the pastors from the churches of the different nations should partake of the communion together.¹

Had this spirit triumphed in the reformed christian world, how much greater conquests might the Reformation have achieved, under the auspices of that union which is strength ! Romanism might not at this moment have remained the predominant religion of Europe. Peacemakers, however,—such as JOHN DUREUS, who spent forty years in incessant labour to promote union between the Lutherans and the Reformed,² could not avail against the general intolerance of the Lutheran church. If to this we add the schismatical influence of that secular ecclesiastical power which necessarily blended itself with the Reformation, we have sufficient causes for the failure of these noble projects of catholic confederation among Protestants. Even while national churches were cultivating brotherly intercourse abroad, and kindly receiving Christians of other countries ; they were persecuting those of their own members who differed from them for conscience’ sake. England sent a bishop, and three other

¹ ‘ See Quick’s Synodicon. 1692. vol. i. p. 434.

² Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. by Maclaine. 1803. vol. v. p. 275.

episcopal dignitaries, to the Synod of Dordt—there to hold the most fraternal intercourse, for six months, with ministers of various churches, all non-episcopal—to join in presbyterian worship—to renounce all party distinctions—and to recognise those who were not episcopally ordained, as ‘brethren’ and ‘associates’ in the ministry.* This was an act worthy of the Reformation:—but the Puritans were still hated and persecuted at home! The Dutch Church gave a cordial welcome to the representatives of the Swiss, German, Scottish, and English Churches: but no sooner had the Synod broken up, having decided in favour of the Calvinistic views, than the Remonstrants of Holland were severely persecuted; and a country which had been to the Brownists of England, an asylum from ecclesiastical oppression, now, with like tyranny, banished her own children from her soil! Such is the false and inconsistent position in which religion may be placed, when bigotry is armed with civil power to punish mere error of opinion, real or supposed! In modern times, Great Britain has happily been teaching the doctrine of religious liberty to Europe. Providence has inscribed that lesson, in significant characters, on the new thrones of Roman Catholic France, and

* ‘Fratres sumus, simus et collegæ.’—Hall’s Sermon before the Synod of Dordt.—*Acta Synod. Dordr.*

Roman Catholic Belgium ; but Protestant nations have it yet to learn—witness the intolerant measures of Protestant Holland, and Protestant Prussia, at this day.

Again : much as remains to be accomplished in christian union, the present age exhibits some *examples of the approximation of religious denominations to greater mutual agreement*, which may be regarded as instructive precedents ; deserving, as far as practicable, general imitation. In some cases, there has even been more or less of amalgamation. In Germany, the distinction between the Lutherans and the Reformed, is becoming merged in the common name of the ‘ Evangelical Church.’ Sometimes, a body composed of each of these denominations, may be found harmoniously united under the pastoral charge of two ministers—one previously a Lutheran, the other a Calvinist. In other instances, provision exists by which a congregation of the latter Confession, on joining the ‘ Evangelical Church,’ may retain such of its former institutions as are more popular than those of Lutheranism. Concord is also promoted, by accommodating the administration of the eucharist to the feelings and habits of both parties : hence the ancient source of dissension is avoided. If, in some places, the way has been prepared for this union, less by the harmonizing influence of the truth, than by the indiffe-

rence of neological error;—in other places, the two parties have united on the christian principle of desiring to evince their unity in essentials. When Germany, in general, shall have returned to the long-forgotten doctrines of the Reformation, how greatly may this abandonment of party-names tend to promote the influence of the truth on the Roman Catholic part (still the considerable majority) of the population ! It is deeply to be regretted, that while the union, wherever else it has taken place, is voluntary;—in the Prussian dominions, attempts have been made to effect it by the hateful policy of coercive measures—the corrupt working of the old leaven of political despotism in the church.

America has furnished examples of the triumph of charity over sectarian prejudice, which the parent-land has yet to equal:—America, the theatre of some of the boldest experiments that have ever been tried in the social economy of man; and in the progressive results of which, the interests of religion are in no small degree involved. What an empire has grown up, since the memorable hour when the Pilgrim Fathers landed on the rock of Plymouth—and poured forth their prayers to heaven, on a shore where no ecclesiastical decree had made it schism to listen to the voice of conscience, and treason to be faithful to Christ ! If history be ‘ philosophy teaching by examples,’ the con-

tinued spectacle of pure Christianity beyond the Atlantic, restraining the conflicting elements of Romanism, and Infidelity, and human selfishness and ambition, by her own native strength, independently of alliance with temporal power—will be the most impressive lesson by which the old world can be taught, that religion is then most mighty to produce good, when she is most free. It is to America that the responsibility belongs, of upholding before the world a practical demonstration, that Christianity is capable of being trusted as the conservator of society, without the invidious imposition of arbitrary human terms, as essential to church-union;—a state of things, wherever it exists, in which religion is placed in the unnatural position of becoming the instrument of unjustly depressing in the scale of society, large masses of conscientious men; and which has been, and must be, the endless source of schism in the church, and distraction in the state. Europe, like one who learns late, and has much to unlearn, may be slow to receive the lessons of truth; and the condition of society may require, that changes in the relations of religion to the civil power, should be gradual:—but the moral and religious character of the United States will continue to be closely watched, in connexion with the fundamental law of their social economy—the freedom of religion. To those who are

only to be convinced by practical results, every surge of the Atlantic will bring some testimony respecting the *good* or *evil* effects of a system of ecclesiastical equality. Above all — when will America redeem her boasted liberty, and her religious institutions, from the foul reproach of *slavery*? slavery—which has been a fire-brand of schism to her churches, and has threatened to disorganize her empire! Will she rise to that might of moral power which shall enable her to rid herself of the ‘accursed thing’?—Let not Britons, however, exult over her for this her national dishonor—let them remember how late, and how hardly, they themselves have shown repentance for their own sin!

It is evident that the New England colonists, however pious, little understood the great doctrine of liberty of conscience. Congregationalists demanded church-membership as a test of qualification for civil offices; and the ‘Standing Order’ was rendered exclusive by penal laws! Thus the causes of schism in the mother-country, were borne across the ocean, to mar the religion of the western world. But New England became wise; and religion, after some struggles, became free. Still the mutual prejudices of the original denominations, have been manifested, more or less, in the transatlantic churches. In 1810, however, the acciden-

tal circumstance of a place of worship being lent by one congregation to another, led to occasional common participation in the Lord's Supper, between regular Presbyterians, and the Associate Reformed. 'Such an event, it is believed, had never before occurred in the United States,' says Mason in the Preface to his 'Catholick Communion'—a work, the spirit of which is in harmony with its name. Thus was the seed of union among Christians sown in a soil, where the distance and alienation so common in the other hemisphere had reappeared and flourished. Happy is it, when so slight a providential conjuncture suffices to call into operation the great law of the kingdom of Christ; which *must* prevail—though it should be by means of more solemn and impressive lessons to nations, or to churches! Ten years afterwards, a plan of brotherly alliance was agreed to, by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and the General Synod of the Associate Reformed; on the principle that the two churches were to retain their separate independence, as before: but it was resolved that 'members of either church may be admitted to communion with the other; and that the officers in any congregation of either church, may invite to their pulpit any minister or probationer in the other, who preaches in their purity the great doctrines of the gospel, as they are stated in the common Con-

fession of Faith, and have generally been received and taught in the Reformed Churches. Those under censure in one church, are not to be received into the other.’¹

The author of the work entitled ‘Three Years in North America,’ published in 1833, informs us that, during his residence in the United States, he occasionally observed such notices in the newspapers, as the following: ‘The corner-stone of a new Baptist church was laid at Savannah in Georgia, and the ceremonial services were performed by clergymen of the Methodist, German Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Baptist churches.’ This was an example which the great and pious Washington, himself, would have approved; who freely joined in the Presbyterian communion—declaring: ‘Though a member of the Church of England, I have no exclusive partialities.’² But, even in America, Episcopacy has exhibited somewhat of that spirit of loftiness and reserve towards sister churches, which have marked her career in the parent-country, and have made her the anomaly of all the Reformation: for the hour is not yet come when she must learn the lesson of Christ, in its full import: ‘All ye are brethren.’ Yet it would seem that, in the

¹ M’Crie’s *Unity of the Church*. 1821. p. 96, note.

² Hosack’s *Life of Clinton*; quoted in Dick’s *Improvement of Society*. 1833. p. 531.

United States, the *constitution* of the Episcopal Church presents no insurmountable obstacle to a reciprocation of ministerial duties, as on this side of the Atlantic. ‘A learned and pious Presbyterian minister of the State of New York,’ wrote as follows, in 1833, to his friend in England: ‘I deeply regret to hear that so much of the spirit of sectarianism prevails among the different religious denominations of your country. We, too, have enough of it; but it is here manifestly on the decline. You may possibly think it an unreasonable stretch of liberality, when I tell you, that, within a few weeks, I suffered an Episcopalian to preach in my pulpit, and to use his own forms of prayer. But such is the state of feeling in my congregation, that, though such a thing had never before occurred among them, yet it met with their universal and unqualified approbation. On the other hand, I expect, in the course of a week or two, to preach a charity sermon here, in one of our episcopal churches, and to perform the whole service in my own way. This, it must be confessed, is a little uncommon, even in this country; but everything indicates that such expressions of good-will, even between Presbyterians and Episcopalians, will soon become frequent.’* It may be added, that the connexion between the Presbyterians of the middle States, and the Con-

* Dick’s Improvement of Society. 1833. Appendix.

gregationalists of New England, is so intimate, that the distinction would seem to be principally local; so little stress being laid on their differences, that the pastors of the one church readily become pastors of the other.*

But what, in the mean time, has been the state of things in regard to christian union, in *our own country*? In Scotland, the Burghers and the Anti-burghers now form the United Secession Church. In Ireland, it would seem natural that the overwhelming influence of Romanism on the population, should be regarded as calling for the consolidation of Protestant Christian exertion, and such a relaxation of the bonds of sectarianism, as should promote cordial brotherly union in good works. But if this tendency of the state of religion in Ireland has been actually *felt*, it has been perpetually held in check by the exclusive spirit of the Establishment; and Protestants have to contend against the errors of Popery, with the disadvantage of division amongst themselves. In England, there seems little real organic impediment in the constitution of most of the denominations, to almost any degree of the manifestation of unity—short of a surrender of the independent existence of the several bodies. Indeed all the great dissenting communities in the three kingdoms,

* See A Narrative of a Visit to the American Churches, by Drs. Reed and Matheson. 1835. vol. ii. p. 80.

practically recognise each others ministerial *orders*. Their systems also admit of reciprocal fellowship in the Lord's supper—that of Baptists of the strict communion, alone, excepted. In all other respects, Baptists, Independents, and orthodox Presbyterians, are more especially allied. They maintain the most brotherly intercourse, both private and public; and their union is evidently at this moment growing stronger. There have been cases in which a church and its pastor have held different views on the subject of baptism, with no inconvenience to either—much less any breach of charity. Catholic communion will probably gain ground in the Baptist denomination, in proportion as education advances among the laity: again, the recently-adopted internal organization of the Independents, brings them nearer to the Presbyterians; and it would seem likely that the above three bodies may ultimately form a union, similar to that of the Lutherans and the Reformed in Germany, who, though retaining some of their respective peculiar rites, are found united under one name.

In short, we cannot intelligently survey the relative positions of the orthodox Protestant dissenting bodies, without perceiving that there has been a degree of union among them, which proves that *habit*, rather than any serious difficulty in principle, has, in most cases, been the main cause why they

have not combined to frame measures, by which they might present to the world a still more powerful demonstration of unity. The Church of England and Ireland, alone, of all the Protestant communities in the empire, has, on system, maintained absolute and entire separation from the rest.

In some instances, periodical devotional services have been instituted, comprising ministers and churches of various denominations. In the years 1831, and 1832, when the dread of the Asiatic cholera produced a state of mind, in some places, that was favourable to spiritual religion, meetings for prayer were held, in which Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and Methodists, united. In some cases, great numbers attended, and discovered an unusual degree of devout feeling, and of brotherly love; and there was reason to believe that these services were followed, through the blessing of God, with the happiest results on the character of individuals. But though 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness' should prove a voice of Providence causing all other Protestant churches in a town to forget their differences, and to mingle their vows, in the solemn assembly—not so the Episcopal church: she must be the 'solitary exception' to this union!* Thus are

* See the Congregational Magazine for April 1832, p. 222.

her sympathies estranged from the fellowship of the church universal! Her sons can neither receive, nor reciprocate its invitations! They are compelled to be a schism from the faithful of all Protestant Christendom beside! Ought this so to be? Ought human laws, or customs, to be allowed thus to nullify the laws of Christ?—Yet there are noble examples of clergymen rising superior to prejudice, and going to the utmost within their power, to show that christian love should be paramount to all arbitrary and artificial distinctions.

In a large village in one of the midland counties, where the only places of worship were the parish church and a Baptist chapel, each minister, with a considerable portion of his congregation, frequently mingled in the worship of the other; and the vicar, though he could not admit his dissenting brother to his pulpit, often prayed for him publicly as his ‘fellow-labourer’; and repeatedly uttered such sentiments in his sermons as the following: ‘We the ministers of this parish, desire above all things your salvation.’ He was also in the habit of introducing the non-conformist to his clerical visitors, as his ‘colleague.’ A united monthly service was held in the parochial school-room, at which both ministers presided together; and because one of the dissenters objected to the use of the vicar’s hymn-book, he procured Watts

and Rippon; and said to his colleague: 'Now we will use no other; the bigot shall not make a quarrel.' The vicar and the dissenting minister were also joint secretaries of a society for the relief of the sick poor; and a united auxiliary society was instituted, the funds of which were divided between the Church and the Baptist missionary societies. The church was crowded, and the chapel was greatly enlarged; and both congregations flourished exceedingly.*

Some years ago, when an eminent minister of the Scottish Establishment visited a city in the west of England, a clergyman of catholic spirit, not having it in his power to invite him to his pulpit, secured the object of hearing the voice of his Presbyterian brother in the church, by placing him in the chancel to address the children of the Sunday-school, some of whom stood before the preacher; who, after a few words to them, delivered a regular discourse to the audience. What would the the Christians of the apostolic age, and of the purest succeeding times, have thought of the state of religion in a country where such ingenuity would be requisite, in order to evade ecclesiastical laws which contravene those of the Head and Lawgiver of the church!—laws which place the ministers of Christ in a questionable position as

* See a Tract on Christian Union, 1835; by the author's friend, the Rev. George B. Kidd, of Scarborough.

to their artificial obligations, while they aim to fulfil their Master's command: 'Receive ye one another, as Christ also hath received us, to the glory of God'! Can it be doubted by any candid mind, that such a state of things is most unnatural—utterly at variance with the spirit of Christianity?

Happily, however, there is a considerable field for the exercise of fraternal charity, where even the churchman may unite with his dissenting brethren, apart from all ground which is forbidden by exclusive laws; and without rendering himself obnoxious to the charge of irregularity. Such an example as the following, is in beautiful harmony with the genius of Christianity: 'According to previous arrangement, we had a social meeting of all the missionaries on the island, (Wight,) who were, like ourselves, detained from their destination by adverse winds. There were twenty present; seven Wesleyan, two Episcopalian, five Baptist, and six German missionaries—I believe, of the Lutheran church. Our interview, as may be expected, was delightful; and, I trust, highly profitable. What contributed not a little to it, was the presence of the ministers of the different religious denominations in the town. The prayer of——(a clergyman of the Church of England,) in which he commended us to God, I shall never forget.'*

* Baptist Magazine, March, 1834.

That *union*, so far as relates to certain works of christian benevolence, might exist between churchmen and dissenters far more extensively than it now does, without clashing with the obligations of the former ; may be gathered, surely, from the laudable precedents which have been set by some of the chief dignitaries of the church. Their appearance as advocates of the Bible Society, in mixed assemblies of Christians, cannot but be regarded as a happy testimony to the unity of the church of Christ, and its independence of mere external distinctions. The Religious Tract Society, also, and the efforts of City Missions, have not been destitute of all similar sanction.* Sometimes, too, sentiments may be heard from the most influential churchmen, which are eminently distinguished by their catholic and candid tone, and which all parties would do well to imitate.

In a recent episcopal charge, the clergy are exhorted to relinquish the claim to the exclusive guidance of *education* ; and to consider whether they are not justified in uniting in this work with members of ‘ other flocks,’ on the common ground

* See the remarks of the Bishop of Norwich, at a meeting of the Religious Tract Society, in that city. *Patriot*, March 22, 1838.—Also a Sermon for the Norwich City Mission, by the Rev. R. B. P. Kidd ; dedicated, by permission, to the same prelate.

of ‘ united belief in Jesus Christ, both God and man, our Saviour, our Lawgiver, our King?’ After an allusion to the ‘ almost endless variety of the opinions which are found within the pale of the Church of England,’ it is added: ‘ Those who think that it is impossible to sympathize with Christians without our own fold, on account of their differing opinions on points not essential to salvation, would do well to consider whether this difference is in reality greater than that which exists between members of the Establishment. And if they can live at peace with one another within the same forms, why should not conscientious dissenters and conscientious churchmen live, I do not say within the same forms, but within the same feelings of christian love and harmony? Contemplate the divine excellency of those great truths which unite us to all Christians . . . Shall we not find that all these truths, which it is death to lose, and life to know, are precisely those which we share in common with all who agree in the worship and service of our one and common Divine Redeemer? Can it then be the will of Him whom we both serve, that we should look on pious and conscientious dissenters, (to whom alone these my remarks are directed, for with others of a factious and political cast, I have no concern and cannot sympathize,) rather as our natural enemies, than our mistaken friends ?

Let us abide by the faith of our Protestant ancestors, whose object was to proclaim that there was a deeper and more scriptural unity, than the unity of ecclesiastical organization, or of ecclesiastical details,—I mean the unity of christian principle, the unity of the Spirit.*

There is so much genuine liberality in sentiments like these, that the considerate Non-conformist will make due allowance for the position from which those who are identified with the Establishment as it now is, view the great conflict of ecclesiastical principles which found an arena on the passing of the Toleration Act, soon after the memorable epoch of 1688; and which has so deeply thickened on all sides, in our own day. Even a liberal churchman, may be disposed to regard as ‘political,’ or almost ‘factious,’ what, to a conscientious dissenter may appear as the struggle of Christianity to regain her apostolic freedom from subjection to human impositions, and sectarian bonds:—a struggle in which parties may possibly join, for whose character and conduct the *principle* is not responsible; as the abstract principle of an established religion is not responsible for many of the accessory evils which have blended themselves with it: since it must be confessed that an Establishment *might* be framed on much more christian and equitable principles, than those which have usually been adopted as a basis.

* Charge of the Bishop of Norwich. 1838. p. 22. etc.

The dissenter, however, ought not to allow his charity, or the readiness which he has generally manifested to unite with the churchman in good works, to be diminished, even though the latter should dispassionately pronounce 'Dissent' to be 'a great evil.'* It would be a truly happy pledge of peace, if both parties would bring themselves to tolerate, with equanimity, fair and manly discussions respecting each others ecclesiastical systems. At least, let all Christians who admit that their respective denominational distinctions are non-essentials, endeavour to be less sensitive when these minor points of their creed are called in question. That the present controversy as to the polity of religion will be but temporary, appears by no means probable. It is more likely to go on to work those results, which, whatever they may ultimately be, will no doubt harmonize with the spiritual prosperity of the christian church. But on the *manner* in which this controversy is carried on, much depends. Difficult (let us not say hopeless) as may be the task—peace and charity can be maintained, only by the pious of each community allowing their brethren who differ from them to employ every honorable and christian means to diffuse their own views, and by making the contest, a contest for *truth*—not for victory, or party-ascendancy.

* Charge of the Bishop of Norwich. 1838. p. 24.

Let not Christians, then, indulge the idea of awaiting the issue of the present conflict of opinions, before they seek further union. This conflict seems inseparable from the existing position of religious denominations ; and no earthly power can stay its progress. It were idle to imagine so. All that can reasonably be expected is, that the genuine followers of Christ, on both sides, should not forget the spirit of their Master. The state of things, indeed, is obviously such as to furnish an easy inlet to unchristian strife ; and with this angry flood, religion and truth may easily be confounded, till they seem lost in the maelstrom of human passions. Hence the sincere and peaceable friends of religion, may have to bear the blame which is properly due to violent men of all parties. Let Christians, therefore, endeavour to moderate the contest. When they feel bound to express their opinion publicly on ecclesiastical affairs, (and who can deny that this may be a matter of conscience?) let them do it *as Christians*. If they must exercise agency, either to uphold their systems, or to effect what they deem salutary changes, let *principle*, not passion, be their guide. Let them remember that religion itself is of more value than its forms—that peace is more to be desired than hostile triumph—that so long as all do not think alike, mutual concession must be the price of unity.

The present schisms are undoubtedly matter of deep humiliation before God : and, in every denomination, there are those who mourn over the distractions of Zion ; and earnestly long for the time to come, when ‘ the envy of Ephraim shall depart—when Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.’ Let all who desire to promote the honor and influence of religion, *seek to advance union among Christians ; especially between those of different sections of the church.* Let their plans of christian benevolence be expressly framed on the principle of honoring each others private, conscientious scruples—making the great points of Christianity the basis of union—and manifesting that union to the world. Let none say that the existing state of parties ought to keep Christians asunder, as to all those things in which they *do* agree. Alas ! the violence of the storm renders it the more necessary to endeavour to preserve the fruits of peace, lest they utterly perish. Still—still, let there be *some* ground, at least, which shall be redeemed from the conflict—where the spirit of charity may yet find a refuge—where those who are disposed to be pacific and fraternal, may unite to save that spirit from extinction ; and shelter it, ‘ till these calamities be overpast !’

What, then, are the means which should be adopted for the cultivation of such a spirit ? The

means are abundant. All that is required is the disposition to employ them. Several *Societies* have already been mentioned, the objects of which are so catholic, that while they have no particular relation to the tenets peculiar to any one christian denomination, they have a common claim to support from all. Of such institutions, there are now many; and they furnish the most obvious and ready way to the more visible union of the universal church. Let Christians who, from exclusive feelings, may have failed to mingle in these efforts of spiritual benevolence, reflect on the duty of coming forward and joining their brethren in the sacred attempt to diffuse the word of salvation, and to exhibit to the world the true spirit of Christianity.

Another mode of advancing the progress of union, would be the more general adoption of a custom which has obtained among the dissenting denominations, of *uniting in meetings for prayer, on behalf of missions* to the heathen: the services being held in rotation at the respective chapels, and the ministers delivering an address, in turn. It is to be lamented that schismatical laws prevent those of the clergy of the Church of England who are disposed to union, from joining in such a plan.

It is usual, in several of the denominations alluded to, for the ministers to take some part, in

common, in the *ordination* of a brother. This practice should be cultivated as studiously as possible; that a direct testimony may be borne, among brethren, to their respective claims to the pastoral character; as consisting in publicly recognised moral and spiritual qualifications, apart from any sectarian exclusiveness with regard to the validity of 'orders.'

A more especial method of furthering the desired union, would be for those ministers, of various churches, whose minds are devoutly alive to the importance of the subject, to hold *private meetings*, periodically, in their own immediate localities, for the purpose of promoting fraternal intercourse, and mutual edification. This combination is not untried; and it is calculated greatly to increase mutual confidence and goodwill. Is there any just reason why any of the ministers of Christ should exclude themselves from such an association? for, happily, they need not now fear lest they should be dragged to prison from the circle of private friendship, and domestic prayer: and the Episcopalian, by uniting in this hallowed bond of charity, would not subject himself to the operation of ecclesiastical penalties.

The above means, if generally employed, would be nothing more than the extension of practices which are already more or less familiar; and

which, even in themselves, contain the elements of a much higher degree of union than now exists. The friendly association of ministers would also have the advantage of furnishing a ready way to such further schemes for promoting the great object, as might be practicable in each locality. And though, under the existing discipline of the Church, the evangelical clergy can publicly unite with dissenters but to a very limited extent;—how much would be gained to the sacred cause of unity, by their cordially joining to advance it in private !

Ministers of dissenting churches might more expressly further the object, by *public devotional meetings* in their respective neighbourhoods. Stated lectures might also be delivered, by various ministers, at different places of worship in succession ; with a view to bring the subject of unity before the minds of Christians more clearly, and in all its bearings. This plan, also, is not without successful precedent.* Mutual participation in the Lord's Supper has also been proposed ; and though *strict* Baptists cannot join in this catholic communion, they have been included in all the other services connected with measures of brotherly union. Let brethren thus be determined to

* Tract on Christian Union, by the Rev. G. B. Kidd, p. 3.

unite to the utmost limit which principle will admit. The true apostolic spirit of love, prevailing in the minds of a few leading individuals of different denominations in a locality, would be at no loss for expedients, or for the means of overcoming all obstacles not absolutely insuperable. *

Again: in order to aid the cure of schism, LET ALL THEORETICAL OBJECTIONS TO SUCH UNION AS IS PRACTICABLE UNDER THE PRESENT REGULATIONS OF CHURCHES, BE BROUGHT TO THE TEST OF THE REVEALED WILL OF CHRIST. It must be evident to the most cursory observer, that the position which the established and the dissenting churches sustain towards each other, is incomparably the most serious source of disunion and schism which now exists among Protestant Christians in Great Britain. It is also *matter of fact* that orthodox dissenters, in general, are fully prepared to hold fraternal intercourse, and to co-operate in good works, with members of the establishments, on the common ground of Christianity. Is it not true, however, that churchmen have for the most part declined christian association with their non-conforming brethren? It will scarcely be urged, that this want of union is adequately accounted

* It has even been proposed that a general 'Society' should be formed 'for promoting Christian Union, by means of correspondence, tracts, publick meetings, periodical papers, and itinerant lecturers, etc.'—See the above Tract, on Christian Union.

for, when traced to the ecclesiastico-political contests of recent years. That these contests have lamentably increased the distance between the parties, cannot indeed be doubted; but it must be admitted that, even in the calmest times, when there has been the least of party conflict, the general spirit of the establishments towards the whole dissenting community, has been that of reserve and alienation. The bulk of the clergy of the Church of England have discovered little disposition to unite, fraternally, in common christian objects, so far as they might have done, in their several localities, even with those dissenters who have been the least forward and prominent in asserting their claim to equal political rights, as peaceable citizens—or to spiritual equality, as Christians. Why, then, have non-conformists been thus generally treated as though they were unworthy to be cordially regarded as brethren of the same family? Will it be said that this anomaly is due to the bare fact of the existence of a religious Establishment?

Is it, then, to be understood that there is something in the very nature of an Establishment, which opposes christian unity and love? Does the circumstance of belonging to a national church, atone for the absence of hearty sympathy with all the followers of Christ who are not included in its communion? Is it the prerogative of an esta-

blished religion, that the relation which it sustains to the State may lawfully sever the ties of charity, prove a barrier to union in works of faith, and alienate christian friends and brethren from each other? Is it to be regarded as a sufficient reason for my manifesting no complacency in one who bears the image of Christ, that *I* am a member of the Establishment, and *he* is not? Is the fidelity to conscientious conviction that may have kept him from a path which might have conduced to his temporal interests, to go for nothing in my estimate of his character? and are the laws of Christ respecting unity and charity to be virtually repealed, because there is an established religion in a country? Are disunion and schism the necessary consequence, then, of a state-church, deriving its form, and its privileges, from the authority of the civil magistrate? The claim to coerce conscience, is no longer put forth by the power that constituted and upholds 'the Church;' and half the Protestants of England who appear to pay serious attention to religion, worship securely, under the protection of the law, in non-conformist sanctuaries:—but will it be said that 'the Church' is still entitled to maintain a lofty and repulsive attitude towards all other christian communities? and is this to be defended on the principle of the secular superiority of an Establishment? If so, is this the spirit of Christianity, or the spirit of the

world? The reply is obvious.—Surely then, no true friend to the Established Church would desire to admit suppositions so fatal to its claims! Surely it must revolt a truly christian mind, to urge the *temporal* relations of an Establishment, as paramount to the spiritual relation of all Christ's disciples to each other—as an excuse for declining all practicable union with the pious of every name! What, then, we ask, is the theory by which the *churchman*, alone, withdraws his sympathies from all who are without the pale of his own church?

Many, who would rest nothing on the supposed claim of the magistrate to determine the form of church-government, (though this claim was clearly the basis of the Reformed Church of England,) are prevented from recognising their non-conformist brethren, by the hypothesis of the *divine right of Episcopacy*, and the *apostolical succession and sacramental efficacy of episcopal orders*. Some impressions from this baseless vision, may haunt the imagination, even where it would be thought superstition to admit it as a whole; and there is no doubt that, to this cause, is to be traced much of the unsocial spirit which has characterized Episcopalianism, in reference to other denominations. These lofty pretensions have never been wholly extinct: they furnish the most plausible plea for exclusiveness; and they are the strongest opiates by which conscience can be lulled to re-

pose, while the great command of Christ to love the whole 'brotherhood' of faith, is habitually disobeyed. Of late, these claims—previously either dormant or urged with reserve and measure, have been boldly proclaimed before court audiences, and in university pulpits, and by professors of divinity. Learning and poetry, eloquence and zeal, are laid under contribution, to propagate them over the country, and to instil them into the minds of youth. Romanism is spoken of in a tone which bespeaks kindred sympathies; while the principles of the glorious Reformation are openly renounced! Protestants of the nineteenth century, would carry us back to the crude, semi-popish days of the Church of England, immediately preceding her fall, when LAUD 'peeped and muttered,' (like the wizards in Israel,) and chanted mystic incantations, at the consecration of the church of St. Catharine Cree! Protestants, with the lesson before their eyes of what the 'lying wonders' of the 'Man of Sin' have done, by their reaction on the popular mind, to plunge half Europe into infidelity, and to generate in its very heart a fierce democracy which has not yet spent itself—are at this moment holding up Christianity to the scorn of the infidel and the democrat, at home! Protestants are lending themselves to those identical principles which enabled Rome, by her 'sorceries,' to 'deceive the nations'—to

poison the cup of salvation—and to beguile the christian world with delusive dreams of priestly power and sacramental grace,—till all that was senseless and puerile in ceremony, was preferred to the sober majesty of truth ! What is this but departing from the simple and wholesome doctrine of Christ, to return to the ‘ vomit ’ of superstition ?—forsaking the high road of truth, again to walk in the dark path of tradition, the direct way to ‘ wallowing ’ once more in the ‘ mire ’ and slough of Romish corruption ?

Let the fraction of Protestants who would revive these anti-protestant dogmas, and who are thus preparing so easy a passage by which men may return to Rome, take the New Testament into their hands, rather than the *Fathers* ; and, in the light of inspiration, let them solemnly examine the theory on which they have built this their schism from all else that bears the name of the Reformation ! If they will retain this theory, let them adduce something from the word of God, to prove that all Christendom but the small portion of it in which the three orders of Episcopacy still flourish, is barren ground—unblest with one solitary garden of the Lord, which can be called a christian church ! Let them either renounce Protestantism altogether, or offer some good reason for basing it—not on the solid foundation of the entire SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE, but on the shift-

ing sands of tradition, side by side with the church of Rome. Let them not content themselves with the gratuitous assumption, that ‘the fact of apostolical succession is too notorious to require proof;’¹ and that ‘this continued descent is evident to every one who chooses to investigate it.’² For where has this alleged fact been admitted as ‘notorious,’ among some Seventy Millions who profess Protestantism in Europe and America, except within the narrow circle of the Anglican church? and even there but partially, and not at all by its first founders, the Fathers of the English Reformation. To whom is this descent ‘evident,’ but to those who fancy that, by some magic influence, light can exist in immediate combination with darkness?—that a stream of apostolic sanctity is to be found running pure and uncontaminate through the foul sink of papal Rome, even in the times of its deepest corruptions, and its worst abominations? Efficacious, indeed, must be the sacramental grace which could retain its virtue unimpaired, when deposited in a Damasus or a Symmachus, who waded to the pontifical throne through scenes of assassination and slaughter—or when its conveyancers were reckless profligates—harpies in rapacity—remorseless oppressors—monsters of iniquity—successors of the apostles in name, but of the pagan emperors in

¹ Oxford Tracts, No. vii. p. 2.

² Dr. Hook’s Two Sermons, p. 7.

deed! Such were popes BONIFACE VI, JOHN XII, BENEDICT IX, URBAN VI, JOHN XXIII, JULIUS III, and others of like infamy.

What descriptions have Romish historians and biographers themselves recorded, of the morals of the see and court of Rome!—the channel through which the priestly authority and the mysterious functions which are now claimed by Protestants, have been, if at all, transmitted. Cardinal Baroni-
 us, librarian of the Vatican, in his annals of the latter part of the ninth century, states that at this period the Romish church was a theatre of the vilest licentiousness and intrigue. He informs us that, under the most abandoned influences, ‘sees were disposed of, bishops were appointed, and, horrid and abominable to be heard! false popes were thrust into St. Peter’s chair, who, by being enrolled in the catalogue of the Roman pontiffs, merely serve to mark the dates.’ ‘What was then’, exclaims the cardinal, ‘the face of the holy Roman church!—how truly filthy! Rampant lust, sustained by secular power, and frenzied with a passion for dominion, ruled over all things’!*

* ‘*Quæ tunc facies Sanctæ Ecclesiæ Romanæ! quam foedissima! cum Romæ dominarentur potentissimæ æque ac sordidissimæ meretrices! quarum arbitrio mutarentur sedes, darentur episcopi; et, quod auditu horrendum et nefandum est, intruderentur in Sedem Petri earum ama-*

The lapse of six hundred years had done nothing to cleanse the reservoir of the boasted mysterious and sacramental grace, when, in 1492, Roderic Borgia was raised to the pontificate, by the name of ALEXANDER VI.—a man who is described by cotemporary writers, as one of the greatest examples of iniquity that ever existed—the patron of all depravity; so that it is declared ‘there was no wickedness, or enormity, that was not perpetrated in the palace of the pontiff, and publicly in the city. The Scythians were outdone in robbery, the Carthaginians in perfidy, the Neros and the Caligulas in monstrous cruelty: for to tell of the murders, rapine, lewdness, and incest, would be illimitable and endless!’* Facts in illustration, are recorded in a document which was drawn up with a view to concert measures for calling the attention of the Emperor Maximilian

sii pseudo-pontifices! qui non sint nisi ad consignanda tempora in catalogo Romanorum Pontificum scripti.—Sic vindicaverat omnia sibi libido, sæculari potentia freta, insaniens, œstro percita dominandi!’—*Baron. Anal. Eccles.* Antv. 1603. tom. x. p. 679.

* ‘Nihil esse jam scelerum et flagitiorum, *etc.*—O detestandam rerum et temporum conditionem! Vix unquam credet posteritas, *etc.*—Opus est publicum Romanæ pestilentiae clades omnes, quæcumque ab hac infami bellua emanarunt, narrare’, *etc.* Ap. *Excerpta ex Diario Joannis Burchardi.* Hanov. 1699. pp. 80—86.

and the princes of the empire, to the ‘pestilence’ which, it is remarked, had ‘emanated from Rome, and from its infamous monster—to the destruction of the whole christian world.’¹ The authority for these statements, is Burchardus; who was clerk of the chapel, and master of the ceremonies, to his ‘Holiness;’ and who, in his diary, simply narrates the vile orgies of the papal court, without comment.² ‘Never, perhaps,’ says Leibnitz, the editor of Burchardus, ‘did the city, or the world, behold anything more flagitious: lust, perfidy, and cruelty, strove and vied with each other for the mastery!’³

Independent, indeed, must be the sanctity and the divine authority of the church, of all that is devout and holy and benevolent in the christian character, if the church did not lose its ‘apostolical’ prerogatives, although the meeting of its representatives in a province, with a view to destroy the ‘heresy’ of truth by the flames of martyrdom, should be the signal for a flood of vice to deluge a whole city!—witness the Council of Constance:—or if the church could retain its sacramental grace, while the successive curses of the Lateran issued, like devouring blasts, upon the faithful Waldenses and Albigenses, who kept the ‘testimony of Jesus’—and the inhuman Inquisition stained the Alpine

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid. De Convivio quinquaginta meretricum.

³ Ibid. Præf.

snows with their blood, and blanched the plains and valleys of Piedmont, France, and Spain, with the unburied bones of myriads of the martyrs of the Lamb !

Let it never be forgotten that, so far as relates to the claims to divine authority and power which are now made by many of the English clergy, the Church of England, once the bulwark of the Reformation, becomes *identified with the hierarchy of Rome*. If these claims are maintained, it must be admitted that they depend on the papal church. If the apostolical grace has survived all the venality, and faction, and awful degeneracy, of the Romish see—if Simon Magus might have bought this indestructible grace with money, had he lived in the middle ages—to Rome it must at all events be traced : otherwise the links in the succession fail. From about the time when the bishops of Rome acquired universal influence, in the seventh century, till the Reformation, there was a constant communication between the Romish church and England. How often do we read, in our history, of the consecrated *pall* being sent from Rome ? Sometimes, as many as three or four English archbishops were ordained in that city, within a century. Many were ordained elsewhere, by order of the pope. Where, or from whom, for example, was ordination received by Lambert, Langton, Peckham, Winchelsey, Stratford, Chich-

ley, and twice as many more archbishops of Canterbury? Where, or from whom, was ordination received by Godfrey de Kinton, Wickwane, John Romanus, and Corbidge, archbishops of York—all in the thirteenth century? not to mention many others, in previous and subsequent times. In short, will it be denied that the stream of episcopal ordination has come direct from Rome? or that the heraldic pall and mitre, at this moment bear historic testimony to the parent source?

When our Saviour said: ‘If a man shall neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican’;* he plainly referred to that spiritual discipline of the christian assembly, which has, since, been so long exchanged for the temporal penalties of ecclesiastical laws. But when the Protestant abettors of the fundamental dogmas of Romanism call on the court and the nation to ‘*hear the church*,’—the ‘unskilful’ and the ‘unlearned’ are allowed, by those who ought to have taught them to understand holy scripture—to rest in the delusion that, in the language of Christ, the church means the clergy! What is to be *heard* with so much reverence, is precisely the claim by which Rome sustained herself, with a brow of brass, through all her treasons against the outraged name of Jesus—the claim to a divine official sanctity; and the poor simple people are

* Matt. xviii. 17.

led to believe that the ‘heathen’ men, and the ‘publicans’, are all who dissent from Episcopacy, and its three orders of ‘divine right’—that is, let it be repeated, the vast bulk of Protestant Christians in Europe; and all, excepting a numerically insignificant fraction, in North America! It is truly pitiable that any of the laity who can *read*, should be thus imposed on:—but how solemn—how awful is the responsibility of those who are employing their learning, their genius, their taste, their eloquence, their influence—to reconcile men to those very principles which form the basis of that apostasy which is described, by the spirit of inspiration, as the most hateful corruption of the religion of Jesus!—how great the infatuation of those who labour to prepare the minds of men to be acted on afresh by all those artifices which the inveterate policy of Rome knows so well how to employ! Can we wonder that she should rejoice when she sees that the axiom, the ‘Bible alone is the Religion of Protestants’, is at length boldly abandoned? For the flood-gate of tradition once open—there is no solid barrier to the influx of the whole tide of human devices—purgatory—transubstantiation—the mass for the living and the dead—works of supererogation—images—the worship of the Virgin—miracles—monkery—the seven sacraments—holy relics—indulgencies—and aught beside that appeals to sense and imagination, and

makes religion a compound of pharisaism, antinomianism, and romance !

It has been sometimes asked, whether England ever was, or is, included among the nations represented by the 'ten horns' of the Apocalyptic *dragon* that stood ready to devour the offspring of the 'woman' ?* If England shall, at last, identify herself with the mystic 'beast,' and prop his palsied power, by the general apostasy of her church to the main principles of Rome, (which may God forbid !) will not the reply, unhappily, be but too probable ? Well does it deserve the serious reflection of the clergy—in what fraternity they will be taking part, should they symbolize with the 'Man of Sin,' and determine to persevere in renouncing the fellowship of any who have maintained their integrity, and have not 'looked back' on the fated Babylon ? Is it not well to reflect on the solemn call from heaven : 'Come out of her my people, that ye be not *partakers* of her sins, and that ye *receive not* of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities' ? Is it not strange, that, after the Romish church has been exhibited, for three centuries, in the light of the Reformation, Protestants should still venture openly to maintain her fundamental *tenets*—awfully as she is described in the Apocalypse ! 'Upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BA-

* Rev. xii.

BYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.' And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carried her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition; and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.'

The more the doctrine of apostolical succession is examined, the more utterly unreasonable does it appear. It would seem that the alleged sacramental virtue remains unchanged, though it is no longer guided by *spiritual* supremacy, but has fallen mainly under *lay* control. Ethereal and independent, like the lightning of heaven, it retains its nature, come in contact with what it may. Moreover, any conductor may draw it down, and any accident determine whither it shall be conveyed—the state-policy of a court—the influence of relationship—the temporary predominance of a political party—the changes of a cabinet—the securing of an additional vote in parliament—the caprice of a monarch! This

sacramental grace is now completely the property of the secular power, and has been at its disposal for these three hundred years. Thus this most precious gift may be the sport of times and occasions, or even of intrigues ; and the new-made depository of so divine a mystery, may do homage for the boon, to the most profligate of princes, whose kingdom is of this world ; who may bestow it, or suspend it, or multiply it—as he pleases to fill up, or hold vacant, or create a see ! Surely there is no theory in the whole compass of the religion of the New Testament, that is so incongruous—so revolting to the sense of propriety—so alien from the character of the internal evidence of truth ! Yet the doctrine of sacramental grace, and that of the ecclesiastical supremacy of the sovereign, are held as parts of one and the same alleged divine system of the church—be that sovereign young or old, male or female, virtuous or vicious, a genuine believer in Christianity, or merely a Christian by hereditary right to a crown !

It is unhesitatingly affirmed that the ‘ succession’ (such as it is) can be traced, link by link, through one uninterrupted chain, to the apostles. But even were this strictly true—were there no want of agreement in the testimonies of antiquity, respecting the question—whether Clement, or Linus, was the first who presided, by apostolical direction, over the Roman church ?—were there

no discrepancy respecting the two next in order—were the whole case not a matter of dispute*—and though a series of ordinations taking place, throughout, by spiritual, and never by mere state-appointment, could be indisputably shown to have come down from the apostles, in a line of *holy and devoted men*—a line unbroken by the pagan and atheistical depravity of the worst ages of the Romish see ; or by the doubtful claims of co-existing and contending popes ; or by the simoniacal sale of all things to the highest bidder :—yet it is evident that the whole scheme of apostolical descent, and sacramental efficacy, as maintained by the Oxford school of divines, would still be utterly destitute of all solid foundation, unless borne out by the express sanction of the New Testament.

All must admit that this claim, if well-founded, entails consequences, awfully momentous ! It vitally affects the whole complexion of the christian church ; and bears closely on the salvation of individuals. Those who belong to churches, whose ministry is not in the line of apostolical episcopal succession, and sacramental grace, are in a doubtful and dangerous condition. They are left to ‘uncovenanted mercies.’ If any of them are saved, it is ‘*so as by fire.*’ Of course, the

* See Bower’s History of the Popes, 1748. vol. i. pp. 1—11.

devout and earnest inquirer—once awake to the importance of the subject—anxious to ‘know’ the will of God and to ‘do’ it, will turn with eagerness to the charter of salvation; that he may there read for himself the *very words* in which these high claims to exclusive and ‘divine right’ are authorised by the spirit of inspiration. *There*, surely, (for where else should he think of seeking an authority for divine right?) he will find laid down with a precision, second only, if not equal to that in which the vicarious sacrifice for sin is set forth, the doctrine, *that Christ has instituted Three Orders of ministers in his church; the highest order, or that of Bishops, being appointed to govern the pastors and their flocks—that a Church is an aggregate of congregations, extending over a province, or a nation; and that there is no true church, where there is no diocesan episcopacy—that all other churches, so called, are but ‘conventicles’ of schism, and their ministers schismatical teachers—that Diocesan Bishops, tracing their descent from some church founded in the apostolic age, however corrupt it may have become in subsequent times, are the true and only representatives of the apostles—that it is hence they derive their peculiar prerogative of Ordaining to the sacred office; and the power to convey to presbyters a certain mysterious official Grace, which makes the ‘Sacraments,’ as administered*

by their hands, efficacious for the salvation of those who participate in them.

Such are the doctrines, which the diligent and impartial inquirer may expect to find in the word of God:—but not a trace—not a shadow of them, does he discover ! He may read all that evangelists have recorded of the sayings of Jesus, and all that the humble, though inspired apostles did and wrote, till he wonders from what part of the christian revelation, these bold and lofty claims can possibly be drawn ! He peruses and re-peruses the testimony — but in vain !— he finds no authority for this hierarchical Christianity—this official and ceremonial sanctity—this sacramental and hereditary grace — this divine right to supreme rule in the church—this essential distinction of order, and function, and power, between bishops and presbyters ; who, in the New Testament, are one and the same. He compares scripture with scripture ;—he studies the *spirit* of the gospel—he finds it meek, lowly, self-denying, gentle, self-diffident—not wont to take its stand on mere authority, even in an apostle—never solicitous for outward uniformity—ever rising superior to externals, and cleaving to spiritual realities—never lordly, priestly, exclusive, demanding homage, grasping after power :—but affectionate, tender, conciliatory, beseeching, indulgent to prejudice and weakness—non-compliant

and unyielding, only in regard to sin: indeed, opposed, throughout, to the spirit which has ever been generated by the fond dream of ‘apostolical succession,’ and all its attendant visions; whether in the Romish or in the Protestant church.

‘Ye know,’ said Jesus to his disciples, ‘that the princes of the Gentiles exercise *lordly power*¹ over them; and they that are great exercise *authority* upon them: but IT SHALL NOT BE SO AMONG YOU’. In harmony with this command, the apostle Peter, in addressing ministers, calls himself their ‘fellow-presbyter’;² and ‘exhorts’ them, as presbyters,³ to ‘feed the flock of God—taking the oversight thereof, (fulfilling the bishop’s office,⁴) not as exercising lordly power⁵ over the heritage of God, but being ensamples to the flock.’ The apostle Paul exhibits the same unassuming and brotherly disposition—witness his exquisite letter to Philemon—his affection towards Timothy—his persuasive tone in all his discourses and epistles—his exclamation: ‘Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but *ministers by whom ye believed*, even as the Lord gave to every man’? In short, the apostolical spirit, and the spirit ecclesiastical, are contrasted, in all points.

No coherence, therefore, can be given to the

¹ κατακυριεύουσιν. Matt. xx. 25. 26.

² συμπρεσβύτερος.

³ πρεσβυτέρους.

⁴ ἐπισκοποῦντες.

⁵ ἡδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες. 1 Pet v. 1. 2. 3.

scheme of ecclesiastical power by divine right, but as it is made up of dark sayings from the Fathers—sometimes of suspicious origin—always found in connexion with advancing superstition—often rendered plausible, only by being confounded with mutilated wrecks of apostolical discipline—and finally cemented into one mass, by the gigantic ambition of the church of Rome. Driven from the ‘foundation of the apostles and prophets,’ and finding no basis, there, for this ‘fabric of a vision’—the advocates of these claims fly to whatever else bears the semblance of authority. Ignatius, especially, is a pillar to their hope. His epistles are regarded, by many, as the grand support of Episcopacy, or the doctrine of the ‘three orders,’ by divine right; though, even here, the modern bishop finds no prototype, in whom he can recognise his own likeness—for Ignatius’s ‘bishop’ is simply the chief pastor of a christian assembly. The epistles ascribed to this Father, however, contain incongruities so remarkable, as never to have been satisfactorily accounted for, but on the principle of their having been industriously corrupted. For, here, we find the language of piety, in alliance with that of presumption—humility, strangely blended with arrogance—the calm and heavenly confidence of a most devoted martyr, actually on his way to the amphitheatre of wild beasts; and the spirit of a vehement stickler for outward forms—the mild and affectionate address of the apostolic

minister of Jesus Christ, and the incessant dictation (often abruptly obtruded) of blind and idolatrous submission to his own order of the clergy; whose dignity, and that of ecclesiastics in general, is set forth in terms strongly savouring of impiety, and profaneness.¹—How many of the ever recurring schisms of the church, might be healed, if Christians would forsake *tradition*, and human authority; and devoutly revise their theories, by bringing them at once to the test of HOLY SCRIPTURE!²

SECTION III.

THE CURE OF SCHISM, AS RELATED TO CHANGES
IN THE ECONOMY OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.—
CONCLUSION.

IF any predisposing, or exciting causes of schism, are found identifying themselves with the polity and the relations of particular denominations, *as*

¹ See page 128—133.

Salmasius, Blondel, and Daillé, regard the epistles ascribed to Ignatius as spurious. Semler, Griesbach, Campbell (of Aberdeen), Schmidt, Baumgarten: also, Neander, Gieseler, Hase, and others, believe them to have been interpolated, with a view to the support of ecclesiastical domination. See Dr. Pye Smith's Letter to Professor Lee. 1835. p. 55.

² See pp. 74—114, above.

such, it is evident that this evil will (so far) continue to be the endemic disease of the church. It will keep the church in an unsound and disunited state ; and it may, at times, break forth with the virulence of a plague.

The constitutions of the Protestant Dissenting communities, with the exception of those Baptist churches which adhere to ‘strict communion,’ present little obvious impediment to a more avowed and prominent demonstration than now exists, of the fact, that they agree in main *doctrine* ; mutually recognise each others *ministry, mode of worship, and communion* ; and view one another as brethren, on equal terms—no one body claiming superiority or precedence over the rest. Might not these materials be made the basis of more formal and manifest union—in which Presbyterians of the United Secession, Independents, Wesleyans, many Baptists, perhaps Moravians, and some others, might join. Almost all the present organized unions of Christians, are *denominational* :—could not some additional organization, of a more catholic description, be adopted in towns and localities, by which something might be done to modify the present sectarian aspect of churches and denominations ? would not this be strictly compatible with existing distinctions, and conscientious peculiarities ? and would it not be some slight kind of approximation to the state of things

in the primitive times ; when it is evident that all the Christians of a particular place formed but one united community ? *

Some christian denominations, however, which offer no repulsion to more intimate *common* relations, have conveyed the general impression, that they are especially liable to be agitated with *internal* schisms. Either their *machinery* would seem to have been in fault, or to have often required other hands to secure its well-working. The popular form of government which obtains in some of the dissenting bodies, has unquestionably been sometimes in danger of degenerating into a crude democracy. If the extreme point of Episcopacy is a spiritual absolutism, which merges the rights of the christian assembly, and produces a dead calm, in which all vitality is stagnant ; the excess of Independency, is restless in subordination — turbulence — lay domination — anarchy — endless division. Whatever gives cohesion to the Congregational system — especially the close

* Comp. Rom. i. 7. Ephes. i. 1. Philipp. i. 1. Col. i. 2. 1 Thess. i. 1. — On the subject of a confederation of orthodox churches, see Dr. Schmucker's excellent ' Appeal,' in the American Biblical Repository for April 1838. This paper is eminently deserving of attention ; though it is to be feared, that few christian denominations are as yet sufficiently awake to the evil of our multiplied separations, to entertain the enlightened author's catholic plans, in all their extent.

union of neighbour-churches—appears likely to prove to it, a conservative principle, and an element of order. It is manifest that those apostolic churches to which the epistles were addressed, were local and popular institutions, independent of foreign human control. Yet, in them, we see the free principle in a different field of action, from that in which it operates in many modern churches. Several of these, of the same denomination, are often found in one moderate-sized town; forming small societies, which are entirely distinct and separate from each other. An apostolic church, on the contrary, was the whole mass of Christians in one city or locality, united in one body. Very early after the day of Pentecost, the ‘church at Jerusalem’ numbered about ‘five thousand men’;* and, subsequently, it greatly increased.

It seems clear that the liberal autocracy of the primitive churches, was not so uniform and inflexible in its character, as some would be ready to suppose. These churches appear to have admitted of considerable internal modifications, according to times and circumstances; as republican states may vary, as to the channels into which the popular principle is conveyed, and the forms in which it is expressed. The church (or body of Christians) at Corinth, was governed by joint

* Acts iv. 4; viii. 1.

pastors, among whom we trace no distinction. The same appears to have been the case at Philippi. This was also, at first, the constitution of the Ephesian church; which afterwards received Timothy for its superintendent. Again, according to the number of the Christians in each of the Seven Asiatic Churches, the 'angel' may have been, either the sole, or the chief pastor, of one assembly—a strictly *congregational bishop*; or he *may* have been, in some cases, the leading pastor, or superintendent, among those whose united flocks amounted to thousands. On the whole, it would seem that christian churches may differ in their internal organization, without infringing any 'divine right,' or apostolical rule—provided their regulations be in harmony with the lowly, equitable, free, brotherly, unworldly spirit, of the apostolic churches. Those churches were voluntary associations.

The most decided example, in which change of *system* appears called for, among the orthodox Dissenters, is the practice of *strict communion*; as maintained in the majority of the Baptist churches. The same cause of disunion is found in America, even to a greater extent. In the United States, there are four thousand ministers, and half a million of communicants, who would have refused to unite in commemorating the Saviour's death, with the Martyrs of the Reformation—the Latimers, the Riddleys, the Hoopers—who shed their blood for

the Truth!—with the Nonconformist Confessors, the Howes and the Baxters, who suffered loss, ‘for conscience toward God’;—with Jewel or Leighton—with Watts or Doddridge! Were these holy men here below, they might sue in vain at the door of thousands of churches, for a place at the table of the Lord! Blessed men—they would have been denied admission into the church on earth, (strange to say!) by those who do not hesitate to believe that they have been accounted worthy to be received into the ‘heavenly Jerusalem’; and to join the ‘innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, and the spirits of just men made perfect’! The sincerity of the Pædo-baptist is not denied. His brother who differs from him, may rejoice to hear the gospel from his lips—his visits may be welcome in the sick-chamber—the dying may receive from him their final consolations—he may be known at the grave, and in the house of mourning, as a brother and a friend. Also, in all these, and other christian relations, his Baptist brother may reciprocate with him. He may regard him as a true minister of Christ, and a fellow-helper in the gospel. He may avow the strongest esteem for him, while living; and publicly hold him up as an example of christian excellence, when he is no more:—yet, as to participation in the *communion*, he is to be placed on the same footing as the infidel, or the profane! Would it not be more consistent to

treat him, *throughout*, as not having attained to the christian vocation?—When will this singular anomaly be removed from churches which boast of being the asylum of religious freedom!

It has already been remarked, that *of all the sources of schism existing among us, the relative position of the Established and Dissenting churches, is by far the greatest.* And it may safely be predicted, that *alterations* must yet take place in that relation, before peace and unity make advances, on the grand scale. For how unnatural is the present state of parties professedly consisting of the disciples of Jesus! How opposed the spirit so often manifested, to that of Christianity!—grievous heart-burnings, sullen distance, repulsive alienation—relieved only by the storm and broil of actual strife!—one party contending for superiority over the other, and unwilling to yield any abatement of the claims which it has ever made—each party asserting rights, which the other refuses to admit!—the Established Churches persevering in the attempt to uphold all the exclusive privileges and prerogatives for which there may seem any foundation in law; while large bodies without their pale, continue to resist these claims, as encroachments on the most sacred rights of man! What prospect is there, here, of christian unity!

The alliance of civil and ecclesiastical power, in the form in which it has commonly been exhibited

in state-establishments of religion, is undoubtedly a grand corruption of Christianity :—but its *cessation* would seem destined to be by a slow and gradual process. Mankind have, everywhere, been familiarised with the union of religion with the State. It was so allied, among the Pagans and the Jews. It has always been thus united, in Europe, since Christianity displaced Paganism as a partner of the throne, in the fourth century. But as Christianity triumphs, personally, over mankind, there will be a desire to return, as nearly as possible, to the primitive state of the church. This return, however, must carry *conviction* along with it. It cannot be effected by forestalling men's minds. It will be best promoted by first making them thoughtful and reflective Christians. Those who desire to remedy, most effectually, the gigantic evils which have connected themselves with existing religious Establishments, may learn a lesson from the conduct of the apostles. After the atonement of the cross had been offered, Judaism stood in a relation to Christianity, little different from that of a *corruption*; and it, all along, offered a resistance to the gospel, in some respects greater than heathenism itself. Yet the apostles did not aim directly at its abolition :—they sought rather to illustrate the superiority of the new dispensation. Haste and violence, moreover, are wont to produce re-action. It has been so, in our

own history. The defeat of religious freedom at the Restoration, was far more complete than its previous triumph ; and it has been as slow to regain its ground, as that triumph was rapid. There is a method, and a measure, even in promoting truth, which subserves the end, better than attempts which seem imposing—but which are deficient in a solid fulcrum on which to rest.

On the other hand, were establishments wise, they would moderate and limit *themselves*. They would not wait till their reform is rudely forced on them by a pressure from without, which can no longer be resisted. They have always been too prone to overlook the growth of the popular mind. They are content to represent the past, as though it were the present. They forget that the dial of time does not, *now*, point to the hour which gave them birth. Like restored dynasties, they too much affect to treat all that has transpired, since the high and palmy days when they were absolute, as a mere passing episode in a nation's history—not even to be dated as breaking in upon their reign ; whereas, all is changed—neither men, nor things, are the same ; and never can be so again !

If the principles which have been maintained in the present essay, be scriptural ; is it not difficult, we may ask, to come to any other conclusion than this—that, AMONG PROTESTANT CHURCHES, THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AS A SYSTEM, HAS BEEN

PRE-EMINENTLY CHARGEABLE WITH SCHISM? In this estimate, it is not forgotten how many of her clergy have been among the most devoted ministers of Christ—men of peace—an honor to human nature. Many such there are now within her pale. Had all resembled them, she would not have been the same church, which she is. She has numbered prelates, too, who have not lost the Christian in the politician, or the courtier. But we speak of the *system*. Has not the *system* been more calculated to disunite, and divide Christians—has it not been more *uniformly schismatical*—than that of any other Protestant church? Other churches of the Reformation, have been as closely incorporated with state-power—others have persecuted:—but none have maintained a claim to so lofty a dominion over conscience; for no other has clung to the innovation of an exclusive ‘divine right.’ None have halted in the career of reform, so near to Rome—have any been so Romish in their spirit? None have been so rich—have any been so high-minded, or so worldly? Has any one intrenched itself, so effectually, and so perseveringly, in arbitrary impositions, laws, and canons; or shown itself so determined to bar all change? Has any Protestant Establishment acted with so much inconsistency—with so little of the fraternal spirit, as the Church of England manifests, in treating even *Episcopalians* of equal *claim* with the Eng-

lish clergy, to the alleged ‘apostolical descent’,—as aliens from her pulpits and her altars, because not ordained by her bishops? While she recognises Romish orders, she rejects those of the Scottish, and the Anglo-American *Episcopal* churches!

To the Church of England belongs the glory of being ‘first restorer of buried truth.’ But how early was that glory tarnished, by her adoption of exclusive claims—unknown to Wicliffe, and to all the Reformers! The deep piety of Dean (afterwards Bishop) Hall, as we have seen, overcame his high-toned Episcopalianism, at Dordt: but the brotherly ‘embrace’, the ‘tears’, and the ‘right hand of fellowship,’ which, as history records,* marked the parting scene of that venerable Assembly, would seem also, unhappily, to have been the signal for the separation of the Church of England, from the fraternity of all the Reformation! Union in worship—in public ministerial duties—the equality of brethren—were soon to cease! An Englishman may blush for his country, when he remembers that *her church* committed the original schism against Reformed Christendom! She was the first national Establishment, expressly to repudiate the *principle* of catholic unity! Under the auspices of LAUD, the English ambassador, Lord Scudamore, formally renounced all fellowship with the church of the martyr-Huguenots, at Cha-

* Act. Synod. Dord. Sess. xvi.

renton; and ‘took care to publish upon all occasions, that the Church of England looked not on the Huguenots as a part of their communion.’* Gladly might a veil of oblivion be drawn over those days—were it not the fact, that the Church of England still commemorates them, by remaining the most exclusive church in the Protestant world. Yes! her pulpits are yet closed against many of the best of men! She does not publicly recognise them as servants of God, and ministers of Christ! How many martyrs are there, crowned with glory—whom, were they now on earth, she would not own as brethren—her sanctuaries must not echo to their voice!—her children must not listen to their soul-stirring exhortations—their faithful counsels—nor unite in their prayers to Heaven! The Lutheran church has numbered much more than half of all the millions of Protestant Europe; yet this leading church of the Reformation does not thus bar her pulpits by exclusive laws.

And is this exclusiveness apostolical?—and are these the attributes of an ‘*apostolic church*’?—Illustrious names! ye holy apostles of the lowly Jesus!—is this, then, *your* example!—and this the spirit with which ye animated the new-born church! Is this your love—your humility—your

* Lord Clarendon, quoted in Neal’s Hist. of the Puritans. 1773. vol. ii. p. 270.

‘endurance of all things for the elect’s sake’—your becoming ‘all things to all men’! Were the churches *such*, which ye planted by your labours—watered with your tears—and for whose sakes ye counted not your lives dear unto you!

Time was, when liberal *concession* on the part of the Church of England, might have availed to prevent the alienation of a multitude of the people, whose increasing numbers have rendered the appellation of the ‘national church,’ more and more of a misnomer. That the majority of the Nonconformists were willing to sacrifice their preferences, and their feelings, and everything but bare *conscience*, to visible unity—is an historical fact. At the Restoration, they would have agreed to an amended liturgy. They would, also, have yielded to Bishop Usher’s scheme of a reduced Episcopacy;* though this was not, in all points,

* Baxter’s Life, Part II. p. 241.

It is worthy of remark, that Dissenters may still be found, who make no conscientious objection to a similar plan; or who would even prefer it.—‘I own I am disposed to think, that the most perfect church-polity would be the union of a convenient number of Independent churches within a circle of two or three miles, into an effectively beneficial association; yet each having its own pastor or bishop: and also possessing a general superintendent, as do the Lutherans, and our Wesleyan brethren. This would little, if at all, differ from the great and good

what they desired. But their proposals were rejected; and, by means of laws and canons which are still the basis of the Church as an Establishment, she forced from her bosom the bulk of her most devoted and conscientious sons; and a century elapsed before she began to show symptoms of recovery from the deadly wound, which she had thus suicidally inflicted on herself! Yet it has been her policy to resist all change; and she has, uniformly, held fast her exclusive privileges, till the omnipotent power of public opinion has wrenched them from her grasp. Much as she might have thinned the ranks of non-conformity and dissent, by relaxing her terms of admission to the ministry, she has resolutely adhered to them—she has continued to impose obligations, and to demand ‘assent and consent’ to doctrines, which are as inconsistent with Holy Scripture, as they have proved galling to the consciences of many of her clergy. By all this, she has perpetuated, and encouraged, secession from her pale. She has caused a moral power to rise up beside her, which, though it has been small and despised, in the eyes of those who judge only from the outward appearance, has shown a vitality, and a

Archbishop Usher’s, or Mr. Baxter’s plan of a reduced or reformed Episcopacy.’—*Dr. Pye Smith’s Sermon on the Temper of Christians, etc. Appendix.* 1835. p. 56.

vigour, wholly disproportioned to its apparent resources. That power is none other, than an ardent and growing desire, in the minds of many, for entire *freedom* in religion—a power destined, no doubt, to exercise a mighty sway over things which might seem high and lifted up above its reach—like the ‘*little horn*’, in the vision of Daniel, ‘*which waxed great even to the host of heaven; and cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground.*’*

The principle of religious freedom—the principle, that Christianity will best win its own way, by being left to trust wholly to its own energies—apart from all repose on the arm of civil authority—apart from incorporation with the kingdoms which are of this world—is a principle which has now become rooted in the minds of myriads. Many cherish it, as almost a fundamental axiom in religion. The inflexible adherence of the Church to her former exclusiveness, has made Nonconformists Dissenters, and Dissenters strenuous advocates for the *Voluntary Principle*. It is true that, since the Revolution of 1688, the Church, so far as the general spirit of her dignitaries has been concerned, has, for the most part, justly deserved to be pronounced ‘tolerant’, as compared with what she was, under the auspices of the Sheldons and Morleys, the Peirces and Gunnings,

* Dan. viii. 9. 10.

and Sacheverells, of other days—for, happily, the times have changed. But it is, surely, ‘faint praise’ to a christian church, to pronounce it merely ‘*tolerant*’—when *intolerance* is a usurpation and a crime—and lowly-minded, equal, fraternal charity, is the first and great commandment of the law of Christ! A national provision might be made, indeed, for religion, on a scale which should comprehend all denominations, without interfering with the peculiarities of any one; but this provision must either be limited to orthodox Protestants—which might subject *truth* to the imputation of unfairness; or it must support *error*. The way to such provision, therefore, would seem difficult, unless there were sufficient unanimity to place it on a just basis. The present tide of opinion among Nonconformists, is evidently flowing in another direction; and the tendency is so strong, to the bold and decided ground of the primitive independence of Christianity, that the idea of a ‘comprehension,’ either partial or universal, has long ceased to be seriously entertained.

Is Christianity, then, always to labour under this eclipse of its chief glory—the unity of its professors? It cannot be imagined! Both scripture* and reason forbid the supposition. How, then, is the present lamentable state of things to be remedied? How shall peace be restored to

* Isaiah lx. lxi. lxii.

the distracted church? Will the Establishment promote peace, by aiming to maintain itself in its present position, with no modification of its relations, suited to its altered circumstances? Will it continue to add to its vast resources, by large draughts on the current revenues of the nation? Will it seek to fortify itself by flying to the doctrines of the middle ages—the doctrines of Rome, exploded by the bulk of Christendom beside? Will it draw forth, anew, the materials of persecution, from ecclesiastical courts; and from obsolete, though unrepealed, statutes and canons? Will the clergy persist in being accessory to the enforcement of penal law, either of doubtful or of real validity—in order to uphold their ascendancy? Will bishops prohibit those of the clergy who are disposed—from uniting with their dissenting brethren, to carry the gospel into the hovels of those neglected outcasts, whom the machinery of the Establishment does not reach? Must brotherly love and union, still be condemned as *uncanonical*? and is human authority still to contravene the laws of Christ? Or will the Episcopal Church be content to limit her pretensions—to moderate her alleged prerogatives:—and, without sacrificing her lawful endowments, will she relinquish those other claims which she has constantly put forth, founded on the *fiction*, that she represents the religion of a whole people?—Will

she be wise enough to conciliate by forbearance? to give up demands, now grown so obnoxious? Will she revise her Tudor and Stuart canons? Will she be satisfied to remain the most wealthy and influential denomination, among her humble, but no longer despised, and disowned sister-churches?

There are contingencies in public affairs, which may take the most wary by surprise. Changes in the political world, are, sometimes, the development of principles which have gradually gained influence, almost unobserved; and whose power is not estimated, till it is in actual operation; as the electric element, invisibly accumulated on all sides, first reveals itself in the tempest. It is evident, that social systems cannot, now, so easily resist due modification, as heretofore. Their security will consist, more than ever, in their timely adaptation to the actual condition of society;—in their becoming what the altered relations of its component parts—the advance of general intelligence—the progress of public opinion, demand. In our own day, we have seen even *dynasties* unexpectedly overthrown, by a too tenacious adherence to an obsolete policy, unsuited to the age. Religious establishments may create a re-action from without, as well as civil governments. Human institutions, like works of art, are not proof against the accidents of time. A spring-tide, borne in upon a gale, may shatter the

strongest breakwater that man can rear against the ocean, or drive the proudest vessel a wreck upon the shore. There is a tide in *events*; and it is not always safe to brave it. A national church-establishment may be such, and may become so situated, as to illustrate the truth, that it is the church of *Christ*, alone, that is founded on a 'rock.' Nations, and cities, by their irreligion, oppression, pride, and self-security, have been the authors of their own doom: and it is possible for a church, bearing a nation's name, so far to identify herself with the world, its principles, and its spirit—that the period may arrive, when her case may be but too faithfully represented in the language of that warning voice, once uttered to the proudest of cities:—'*Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans! for thou must no more be called the Lady of Kingdoms. I was wroth with my people; I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid the yoke. And thou saidst, I shall be a Lady for ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore, hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly; that sayest in thine heart, I am, and there is none else besides me: I shall not sit as a widow; neither*

*shall I know the loss of children : but these two things shall come to thee in a moment, in one day, the loss of children and widowhood.**

The present times are marked by unexampled activity in the public mind—by an insatiable appetite for knowledge. The slave is emancipated; and all men are seeking to be free. Will it be good policy, then, for the Episcopal church to shut her eyes to the signs of the times? Let her reflect, that there is a *past* to be remembered. Once has the spirit of Romanism, in union with the horror of Puritanism—that is of *religious reform*, infatuated her LAUDS and her WRENS, to hurry her into a collision, from which she rebounded to the dust!—a collision with that freedom, which has had vitality to survive, and to grow strong, amidst all that has, since, threatened it with extinction—the freedom of religion. It may be said, indeed, that the elements which combined to overthrow the Church, in the seventeenth century, were not, all, such as a Christian can contemplate with satisfaction. This is freely granted. But events do not speak with a less monitory voice, or the less deserve to be regarded as fraught with instruction, because we may not be able, on the high principles of the gospel, to justify the instrumentality by which they have been brought to pass. Happily, we live in times, when

* Isaiah xlvii. 5—8.

great changes, (whether we view them as good, or evil,) have been attended only with harmless popular agitation—changes, which, at former periods, would inevitably have been marked by violence. Every lover of his country, and of mankind—especially every Christian—cannot fail to cherish the devout hope, that all future internal conflicts, will begin, and end, only in the discussion, and the struggle of opinions. The Church of England* may, possibly, yet be destined to give serious occupation to the legislature, and to the country. She may prove the dissolution of future parliaments, and the breaking up of cabinets; and the grand burden of religious strife, for some time yet to come:—and if she shall resolve to aim at being, again, what she once was—the dictator of a nation's faith:—if her prelates shall still presume to regard the people as their spiritual subjects and tributaries, and the exchequer as the bank of the church, from which she may continue to draw millions more of wealth; while those masses of the population who conscientiously dissent, are condemned, if not punished, as schismatics and rebels against ghostly authority, and are almost

* It is evident that similar remarks, to a certain extent, also apply to the Church of Scotland. Her 'Act of Uniformity', consisted in 'deposing' the ministers who afterwards founded the *United Secession Church*, in 1740.

denied the Christian name—if, in short, the ‘Church’ shall fail to estimate the position she now holds in the community, as representing the religion of the most numerous body, but not of a vast, and apparently increasing multitude:—it is not difficult to imagine what may, possibly, one day, be the issue:—history may tell the tale—

FUIT ILIUM—ET INGENS
GLORIA TEUCRORUM.

It is eighteen centuries, since the Divine Head of the church commanded his disciples to ‘LOVE ONE ANOTHER.’ Awfully, indeed, has that command been neglected! Is it not time the church had now learned wisdom, by her sad experience of dissension! He who gave that command, will assuredly vindicate his right to be obeyed. ‘HE MUST REIGN’—‘HIS FAN IS IN HIS HAND, AND HE WILL THOROUGHLY PURGE HIS FLOOR’. The barriers which have been reared by human pride and folly, against the visible unity of his kingdom, and which have divided it ‘against itself’, must be taken away; and if christian communities shall refuse to effect this of their own accord—can it be doubted that the language of Jehovah to the ancient and degenerate Jerusalem, will be found solemnly applicable, at this late period, when we are so much

nearer those illustrious days, the glory of which will consist in a return to the long-lost love and unity of the church? ‘THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD—I WILL OVERTURN, OVERTURN, OVERTURN IT—UNTIL HE COME WHOSE RIGHT IT IS; AND I WILL GIVE IT HIM.’¹

The wise and pious HOWE, in the preface to his ‘Two Sermons on the Carnality of Religious Contention,’ remarks as follows: ‘When in one place Christians are exhorted to *contend earnestly for the faith*²; and in another, we are told *the servant of the Lord must not strive*;³ it is plain there is a contention for religion, which is a duty; and there is a contention, even concerning religion too, which is a sin. And that sin the apostle doth deservedly expose by the name of *flesh*, and of the lust or of the works thereof; such as wrath, variance, envy, hatred. Whence it is easy to collect, in what sense it is said, in the mentioned place, the servant of the Lord must not strive; namely, as that striving excludes the gentleness, the aptness to instruct, and the patience, which are in the same place enjoined; where that striving is forbidden. And from thence it is equally easy to collect too, in what sense we ought to contend for the faith earnestly; that is, with all that earnestness which will consist with these; not with such as excludes them: as earnestly as you

¹ Ezek. xxi. 27.² Jude 3.³ 2 Tim. ii. 24.

will, but with a sedate mind, full of charity, candour, kindness, and benignity, towards them we strive with. We ought, we see, (in the mentioned place,) to be patient towards all men. Towards fellow-christians, there should certainly be a more peculiar brotherly-kindness.' ¹

The same spiritually-minded and heavenly man of God, whose whole conduct, in the troublous times of the seventeenth century, was in beautiful harmony with the above sentiments, thus further proceeds—alluding to the sin of party-spirit among Christians: 'How few, that consider this as the provoking cause of Christ's being so much a stranger to the christian church ! And how little is it to be hoped we shall ever see good days till this wasting evil be redressed In the present² deplorable state of things, private (that is, carnal,) interest is the thing everywhere designed by one party and another. And by wishing the prosperity of the church, or endangering it, is only meant seeking the prosperity of our own party. So that there can be no united prayers, nor joint endeavours for any truly common good ; but what seems

¹ Howe's Works (by Rev. J. Hunt). Vol. iv. p. 81.

² These Sermons, preached in 1693, appear to have been partly occasioned by the revival of the Antinomian controversy, in consequence of the republication of Dr. Crisp's Works. But Howe does not specially refer to this circumstance : his remarks are general.

desirable to some, is dreaded and deprecated by all the rest (Let us) be satisfied not to be obliged to do things which we think unlawful ourselves, without entertaining the least surmise but that many good men may judge some things lawful that we do not, and may practise accordingly. That we always keep ourselves in a prepared temper of spirit, to receive further information about doubtful things. That we cherish, in our souls, a universal, sincere love, to Christians as such; and to men as men . . And that our whole design do terminate upon what, so far as we can succeed in it, must be acknowledged by all good men to be a real service to the church of Christ; by gathering into it as many as we can, considering it as made up of persons that with judgment, and in practice, own the very substance of the christian religion. With such dispositions of mind as these, we shall, in this divided state of the christian church, be innocent of the sinful evil of its divisions, and keep, as much as in us is, the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.*

Of the preface, from which these extracts are taken, Mr. Spademan, who preached Howe's funeral sermon, remarks: 'It breathes so heavenly a charity and concern for the truly christian interest, that a very eminent divine of the Established

* Preface to Howe's Sermons on the Carnality of Religious Contention.

Church, did profess a willingness to lay down his own life, if such a state of things as is there described, might obtain among Christians.*

Such is the exemplary language, here finding utterance, on both sides, from individuals belonging, respectively, to parties, between whom, at the present time, a conflict is in progress, which threatens to be of no ordinary consequence to the interests of Christianity. The author of the present essay feels that no apology is necessary, for taking leave of his readers, by presenting to their earnest attention, sentiments so truly Christian as the above. Imagine, for a moment, that this spirit were general in the professing church—how soon would the melancholy scene which it now exhibits, be changed ! Could questions relating to religion, be *religiously* discussed—without the heats of party violence—without the haughtiness of insulted dignity—the love of ascendancy—the envy of superiority—the pride of opposition—the turmoil of wrangling politics—the passion for immature and sweeping changes—the ostentation of victory—the mortified humiliation of defeat ;—how many grievous wounds, under which Christianity is now constantly made to bleed, might be spared ! But the reign of charity is, still, only prophetic ! It is refreshing to know, however, that examples *have* existed, of Christians, who

* Life of Howe, by Professor Rogers, 1836. p. 397.

have been such, as to redeem the supposition of differences and controversies existing without rancour, from being entirely utopian. But where are, now, those who shall rush between christian brethren engaged in unnatural combat? No doubt, in so great a conflict of opinions, ‘offences *must needs* come.’ For when principles of vast extent, and manifold bearing, are at stake—principles which draw in their train, not religion only, but also a variety of *temporal* interests, personal feelings, and political relations; the contending parties are sure to be made up of heterogeneous materials, some of which are found only in accidental combination with religion. But ought not those who *do* profess to enter into the great controversy of the age, as *religious* men—the controversy respecting the limits of human authority in religion (for all may be reduced to this)—ought not members of churches—ought not ministers, more especially—to feel that, in their hands, is placed the sacred trust, of preserving the character and honor of the gospel, as a system of peace?—that, whether it be right or wrong to oppose, as evil, either the ‘territorial’ system as connected with a State-church, or the ‘voluntary principle’ as wholly independent of it, there is a still greater evil—the sacrifice of the *spirit* and *substance* of Christianity, for the sake of what, all allow, is not *essential* to its reign, as a principle in the heart: for its chief varieties of form

have existed, both apart from the civil power, and in alliance with it. Of all evils, will it not be the greatest, for the professed followers of Christ to cherish a spirit of mutual animosity?—such a temper, as shall cause them to be those ‘by whom the *offence* cometh’?

May nothing be expected from the *Evangelical Clergy* of the Establishment?—those who hold dear, and decidedly preach, the doctrines of the Reformation, as the martyr-bishops preached them, whose ashes were the first-fruits of glory to the Protestant Church of England?—or as these doctrines, when drawn from long oblivion, were preached by such men as Hervey, and Romaine? If all those who tread in the steps of these devoted ministers, would allow themselves to be true to the *sympathies* of ‘the Truth:’—would they declare, with united voice, that all, of every name, who hold the doctrine of Christ, obey his laws, and bear his image, shall henceforth, be owned by them, as brethren ‘for the truth’s sake’—that wherever they find the fraternal and catholic and peace-making disposition that dwelt in the Nonconformists, influencing their modern representative—there they find a brother and a friend:—what an omen would this be, of the approach of unity!—what a triumph to the cause of charity—that is, of Christianity! How would the manifestation of such a spirit, disarm the dissenting partisan, whose religion would seem to be, to vent angry and

indiscriminate invectives against the *forms* of the Church', and all that concerns it! What, if *two thousand*, or upwards—the present number, it is said, of the 'evangelical' clergy—with the conscious feeling in their breasts, (for surely they must possess it,) that, in all the higher bonds and more vital elements of religion, there is an affinity of sentiment, incomparably greater, between themselves and many who belong to other churches, than they *can* have with many of their own community, to whom the very term '*evangelical*' is as revolting as the distinction which it marks—if two thousand of the clergy, convinced that they were aiming to 'obey God rather than men', where man's authority clashes with the law of Christ, should join to demand a relaxation of those canons, and those vows of canonical obedience, which would have compelled them to treat Watts and Doddridge as aliens from the commonwealth of the visible church—and which have restrained them from publicly and freely holding brotherly, and devotional, and ministerial union and communion, with such men as Watson,¹ Toller,² Robert

¹ 'A bigot for Independency or Presbyterianism, and a bigot for Diocesan Episcopacy and Apostolical Succession, stand upon nearly the same ground.' *Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley*, by Watson. (Wesleyan Methodist.) 1821.

² 'It was his delight to narrow the grounds of debate

Hall, and Waugh *—what, we may ask, would be the effect?—Would there be no change?—no repeal of those exclusive canons? Would the old corrupt leaven of ecclesiastical law, and ecclesiastical tyranny, still resist the attempt to infuse into the Church, a new principle, and another spirit?

If a return to the Judaizing and Romish views, should not be permitted seriously to obstruct the further progress of spiritual religion in the Establishment; the time may arrive, when the attraction of minds kindred in religious feeling, and in the sympathies of the christian life, may overpower all that now artificially keeps them asunder. The question may, then, come to be—whether the Church can afford *another* ejectionment of those of her children, who are the real stay of her existence—the main prop of that moral influence in the community, which she still possesses?—whether she will risk the loss of a second two thousand, or more, (as the case may be,) of her sons—godly pastors of the flock, and faithful preachers of her own doctrinal articles? The very thought, indeed, of such an event, may *now* excite a smile. But, should the

among sincere Christians, to multiply the points of contact, and to detect the indications of spiritual consanguinity, and a common origin.’ *Memoir of Toller* (Independent) by Robert Hall, (Baptist,) 1824.

* Similar was the catholic charity of Dr. Waugh, (of the United Secession Church.)

true spirit of Evangelical Christianity increase in the Church, as in past years; and should the anti-christian yoke, under which, many of the clergy have groaned in secret before God, continue to be rigorously imposed; it is not impossible that a race may grow up, who shall, one day, burst the chain—like the Israelites, who came forth from bondage, ‘to serve their God in the wilderness,’ and to be free from their ‘taskmasters:’ for ‘*all their service, wherein they made them to serve, was with rigour.*’

If the evangelical clergy, should still maintain the simplicity of the gospel—being preserved from having the energies of the spiritual life palsied, by the deleterious and enervating influence of Romanism in the Protestant church; they may, possibly, yet feel called to resist that ecclesiastical domination, which, in all its forms, would seem too much to resemble the ‘*image of the beast*’ in the Apocalypse. They may have occasion to identify the rejection of human authority, in matters purely religious, with loyalty to Him, who Himself reiterated the truth: ‘ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST.’* They may have, as they value their allegiance to Him, ‘to go forth without the camp, bearing his reproach’—or, to imitate the example of Moses,

* Matt. xxiii. 8. 10.

who ‘by faith forsook Egypt;’ ‘esteeming the reproach for Christ, greater riches’ than all its ‘treasures.’ The movements of the human mind are, now, no longer measured by the long lapse of dark and sluggish ages: and may it not depend on the Established Church accommodating itself, or not, to the altered position in which it stands, and to the progress of knowledge and piety—*what parties* shall celebrate the second centenary of Bartholomew-day, 1662?

May nothing be expected from the pious *Laity* of the Establishment—as regards healing the present schisms of the church of Christ? The Holy Scriptures are in their hands; and, under the teaching of the Divine Spirit, they will prize these, above all the traditions of men. They will find, in the apostolical epistles, that *private Christians* are expected to take a deep interest in all that relates to the universal kingdom of Christ; especially, in remedying the abuses and corruptions of their own respective communities. Will the intelligent and pious laity, then, give their silent adherence to doctrines and practices, which virtually repeal the gospel, as a law of love to the followers of Jesus? Will they consent to be once more brought into a thralldom, too much resembling that, which so many laymen nobly aided to break, at the Reformation, by becoming patrons of the Truth? Will they listen to those who would persuade

them, that the traditions of men are the only effectual security for agreement in *doctrine*? and that those who reject these traditions, are themselves to be rejected from the sympathies of Christians?—whereas, it must be admitted, that, within the pale of the Establishment itself, there has been found a range of opinion,¹ wide as the interval between the arctic regions of rationalism, and the torrid zone of ultra-Calvinism—the high-churchmanship of Bancroft² or his modern followers, and the Erastianism of Warburton and Paley—the Millennarian and other speculations, and the sobriety of evangelical truth?—for as to liability to discordance in opinion, established and non-established churches would seem nearly on a level. Will the laity manifest no concern, on account of that *schism* which is now so rapidly growing in the bosom of their own church—so that even bishops may be heard advocating different sides of the question, from the pulpit and the altar—a schism between those who adhere to the genuine doctrines of the Reformers, and those who would revive the ceremonial grace, and the strange pharisaic antinomianism of Rome? Will pious and evangelical laymen make no effort, by some wise and christian means, if possible to hold a shield of protection over those of the clergy who

¹ See page 508.

² See the Preface.

are ready to unite, in benevolent objects, with all good men; but who are held in check by that spiritual authority which would forbid? When devout Churchmen pray for the ‘good estate of the catholic church,’ and that it may ‘hold the faith in unity of spirit,’ and ‘in the bond of peace’—can they refrain from breathing the desire, that the hearts of statesmen and legislators may be inclined to abolish those ecclesiastical laws, which, so long as they continue in force, must always prove vitally injurious to the ‘peace of Jerusalem’—a clog to the usefulness of the most devoted men—a dishonor to religion—and a fatal obstacle to the triumphs of the gospel? There are many, among the laity, who are anxiously desiring to see another order of things in that Church, to the forms and liturgy of which, they are conscientiously attached—many, who have hearts catholic enough to cherish brotherly affection towards all who worship God, in spirit and in truth. May their number increase!—and may their prayers, and their influence prevail, to aid the great cause of charity! A pious and intelligent laity might do wonders.

In the conflict of principles which marks our day, *Protestant Dissenters* cannot fail to be deeply concerned. Should the surges of party run high with the ebb and flow of political animosity, ere they permanently subside into a calm—what halcyon power shall brood upon the waves? who shall pour the oil of peace on the troubled

ocean—and, under God, preserve the ark of the christian church from being wrecked by the storm? While the raven voice of noisy strife is heard, clamorous, without—where is the ‘dove’, that takes her abode *in the ark*, till she can go forth to pluck the olive-leaf of promise, when the waters are ‘abated from off the face of the earth’? The spirit of the ‘*two thousand*’—the spirit of your Fathers, ye children of the Nonconformists!—their *forbearing* spirit—must inspire you, though not called, like them, to silent endurance—if ye would be true to the principles which taught *them* how to unite the love of freedom, with the self-possessed calmness, and the mildness of men of God! The pious, among Dissenters, must seek to maintain all possible charity with pious and liberal Churchmen; in order that, on both sides, the temper of the partisan, may be merged in the temper of the Christian, whose sole aim is to disenthral the church of Christ from the schismatical bondage which has so long held her captive in the dust! Well may the Churchman turn with reverence to the history of the Marian martyrs; and tell of the meekness of Cranmer—the scholarship of Ridley—the inflexible firmness of Hooper—the honest-hearted plainness of Latimer—all consecrated by that *faith*, which was, to each of these holy men, the asbestos garment that enshrouded the unsubdued — unscathed soul, while flames

devoured the living body ! But the next century, also, had its martyrs—not those, indeed, of the ‘ fifth seal,’ whose ‘ souls were under the altar,’ in the visions of Patmos—but martyrs to a life of oppression and privation—martyrs to calumny and reproach—martyrs to laws, compliance with which they deemed more intolerable than closing their lips in silence, to their beloved flocks—than refraining from the ministry of that truth, for which, no doubt, they, too, had they been called to it, would have shed their blood ! Martyrs they were, to ‘ great tribulation,’ and to the ‘ faith and patience of the saints’ ; and the modern Nonconformist, when he, also, revolves the story of his forefathers, must feel that they were worthy to follow even those who ascended to their rest in the fiery chariot—for, like them, they ‘ counted all things but loss’ for Christ ! The small patrimony of religious freedom, which they were able to leave to the church, has, by the providence of God, been preserved, and greatly improved, in the hands of their descendants, aided and encouraged by liberal Churchmen, during a series of more auspicious years. Happily, persecution for religion has, long since, ceased to characterize the British government ; which has been mild and paternal, in its genius : and if some, we repeat, forgetting the *hour of the world*, should be betrayed into the indiscreet attempt to urge forward the legislature,

once more to 'give their power and strength' to 'the beast' of ecclesiastical dominion over conscience, (for that dominion is the life and essence of the 'Man of Sin,') it is possible that such an infatuation may prove, one day, to have been prophetic!

While there is a loud call to all serious Christians, to act their part, in endeavouring to promote that religious freedom which is the rightful property of the universal church—the freedom without which there can be no real unity—the unity of the mind, and of the heart:—will not the modern Nonconformist, especially, do service to the cause of charity and religion, by carefully remembering in what spirit the illustrious men, whose names he cherishes with filial veneration, have handed down to posterity the precious heir-loom? That, were they now alive, they would still be Nonconformists, none who know their history, and the present relations of parties, can for a moment doubt.* And, in an age of greater freedom, and of more experience by nearly two centuries, they would have better understood the application, and the *extent*, of their own principles—a consideration which does not more invalidate their claim to be regarded as Confessors, than Bacon's glory, as the Father of experimental science, is eclipsed by the mists and shadows of hypothesis, that clung to him, from the ancient schools. In our present

* See Note p. 381.

religious agitations, it is certain that the Nonconformists, as devout men, would have been men of peace. They might, indeed, have taken decided ground ; and, (blessed be God !) no longer called to be victims for the sake of civil and religious liberty—but now its chosen guardians—they might, each in his own sphere, have testified that this liberty is the birthright of all orderly subjects ; and is essential to the final triumphs of Christianity :—but how greatly would they have tempered their zeal, with christian moderation, and with christian charity ! Their closets would, doubtless, have borne frequent witness to their lamentations over the distractions of Zion ; and to their fervent intercessions on her behalf :—but how reluctantly would they have quitted the scene where they were at *home*, to mingle in that of political contention ! Had the tide of circumstances so set in, as to carry them there—had duty ever seemed to call them to take a more public share in what so nearly affects the great interests of religion, and the happiness of man, as *religious freedom*—how earnestly would they have sought to mitigate the strife of party ! How little reason have those who are acquainted with their history, and their writings, to suppose they would have dealt in violence, rather than in firmness—in bitterness, rather than in manly candour—in reproaches, rather than in reasonings—in fierce poli-

tical debate, rather than in the high argument that is drawn from Christianity !

In men who are such as religion has sometimes made them, there is a grandeur, far surpassing all the glory of intellect or genius—the grandeur of moral excellence. The Churchman may be proud of the giant-powers, and the learning of a Horsley : but he must point to a Leighton, if he would show what stars are those, whose presence in the firmament of his Church, have reflected on it a real glory !* The Dissenter may contemplate, with

* ‘ Wheresoever you are, or shall be, for the rest of your time, I hope you are advancing in that blest poverty of spirit that is the only true height, and greatness of spirit, in all the world, ‘intitling to a crown : for ‘theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’ O what are the scraps that the great ones of this world are scrambling for, compared with that pretension ! . . . Your poor friend and servant. ‘ To Mr. James Aird. July 6, 1662. R. LEIGHTON.’

See Abp. Leighton’s Works and Life, by Middleton, vol. ii. Letters.

This apostolic man ‘ would not have the title of lord given him by his friends’ : and, in 1672, ‘he resolved, says his biographer, ‘to leave his see, and to give himself wholly to prayer and meditation, since he could not carry on his great designs of healing and reforming the Church, (according to Usher’s ‘Reduction,’) which he had so much at heart. He said his work seemed to be at an end: he had no more to do, unless he had a mind to please himself with the lazy enjoying of a good revenue.’ *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 24. 34.

satisfaction, the stupendous genius of Milton, as an example of the adoption of *his* views of the christian church, by a mind of the highest order—of power to scale the third heavens of poetry, and to enrapture, with its flights of inspiration, all succeeding generations:—but the cause of religious freedom was yet more holily and illustriously adorned, by the pacific desires and labours of Baxter—the catholic and unearthly soul of Howe—the peaceable and christian prudence of Bates—the religious moderation and] forbearance of Owen.* Let the modern Dissenter, then, seek to imbibe somewhat of the well-known spirit, that dwelt in all the great Fathers of Nonconformity. Let him not content himself with being merely the advocate of freedom; lest he should exemplify what is too often seen in the world—that the love of freedom, without being united with a still higher principle, may easily degenerate into a religion, only of politics and party. With ‘religious liberty’ on his lips, let him, also, endeavour to banish sectarian narrowness and bigotry from his heart. Let him not be afraid of candour, as though it necessarily involved the compromise of principle; nor confound the public abuses of religion, with any one of its external forms. Let him remember that schismatical tyranny has been found in alliance with something very like Congregational-

* See p. 92, note.

ism*, as well as with Presbyterianism, and Episcopacy. Whatever argument this may be against the principle of the civil magistrate being intrusted with *supremacy* over religion, either in a monarchy, or a republic—should it not lead even the Congregationalist to reflect that something more than a *theory* is necessary, to prevent him from taking *his* turn, too, as a persecutor?

If the dissenter thinks that his episcopalian brother ought not to show him less regard, on account of his nonconformity—should he not, himself, at the same time, take a candid view of the churchman's preference for an Establishment, and for Episcopacy? May not opposite sentiments, on both these subjects as abstract questions, consist with entire sincerity, and with exalted piety? It cannot be doubted. Even as the Episcopal Establishment *now is*—admitted by many of the clergy to need reform; while some may deeply feel that necessity:—the considerate dissenter will not be surprised, if even those of the clergy who are the most piously and conscientiously disposed, should not readily draw such conclusions as to their path of duty, as some persons would be prepared to expect. It is easy to perceive, how the churchman, with his different associations—associations, having, in most cases, an hereditary force, may view,

* See pp. 371. 497.

as right, or indifferent—or, at all events, as the least of two evils—what the dissenter, contemplating it in reference to himself, might at once feel to be opposed to his deliberate convictions. Even the *faults* of men's religious systems, are looked at through the medium of their supposed excellencies. Though the dissenter might not be able, with a pure conscience, to enter the Establishment; he will remember how different is the situation of one, who may never have thought of the 'Church,' but in connexion with his most hallowed feelings. He was born, and nurtured in it. He is ardently attached to its forms: and who, but the most prejudiced, has not admired many parts of the sublime Liturgy? or been unable to sympathize with the great Cecil, when he speaks of the emotions which filled his mind, as the reflection occurred to him: 'Within these walls, has been resounded, for centuries, by successive generations'—'Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ!'^{*}

Let the dissenter, then, manifest a conciliatory tone of sentiment and conduct, in reference to the prepossessions and preferences of such of his episcopalian brethren, as give him the opportunity of so doing. Let him not be too eager to see them *dissenters*. Even those who may the most deeply lament the present state of the Establishment,

^{*} Pratt's Remains of the Rev. R. Cecil. 1816. p. 29.

as a faulty system, may not, perhaps, feel prepared for so great a change ; and there is not, as yet, a Secession Episcopal Reformed Church. Let not the dissenter repel his brother ; either by ‘judging’ him, or by being impatient to *judge for him*. His brother has a conscience—‘*To his own master, he standeth or falleth.*’ In short, the dissenter will most effectually serve the cause, both of religious freedom, and of unity, (and these are, or ought to be, one,) by imbibing as much of the spirit of the sainted Nonconformists, as can be transferred from the valley of humiliation which they trod, to the vantage ground of liberty, which is occupied by their descendants. The latter have not gained their present position, more by perseverance, than by moderation. The times in which we live, obviously place religious dissenters, and especially *ministers*, in a situation of high responsibility, as regards their proceedings in taking part in the great controversy of the age. Is not their function something higher, than that of joining in the mixed and indiscriminate cry—*delenda est Carthago* ?

The Israelite, as he sat—a captive—by the waters of Babylon, remembered Zion and wept ! The church is now in spiritual captivity, through her own internal dissensions. Well may Christians mourn over this truly lamentable condition of the church ! There are many who do so, both in Europe and

America ; and, doubtless, their prayers on her behalf often ascend together to heaven. May such prayers be multiplied—and prevail !

The power of the prayer of faith—or some especial voice of Providence, would alone seem adequate to meet the present exigency :—so inveterate is the mischief!—so little immediate prospect does there appear, of the principal parties in our present conflicts, coming together to discuss their differences *as brethren* ! God *will* make his people as they ought to be, *one* : but how far do we at present seem from this consummation ! *Prayer* may avert those judgments and calamities, by which Christians have sometimes been brought to a greater disposition to unite. The Spirit of God can accomplish the grand object of union, by gentler means. If his light and love were to abound, there could no more be angry contention, or cold apathy, among the disciples of Christ—than there can be darkness at noon-day, when no cloud, or eclipse, obscures the sun.

Above all things, then, let Christians, in their retirements, dwell much on the *agency of the Holy Spirit*. Let them pray earnestly, for his blessed influence to descend on themselves, and on the whole church. Without this, will not all that is *said* respecting unity, be an empty sound ? and all that is done in order to promote it, mere machinery ? While there is much *talk* of the ne-

cessity of uniformity to produce harmony, or of the advantages of the denominational system—of the value of an Establishment, or the efficacy of the Voluntary Principle; there are but too evident proofs, that nothing can effectually unite Christians, but a higher tone of personal religion than now generally exists in the professing church. Other means may have a favourable tendency—but this is the grand remedy for schism.

In the Divine Word, we read that the ‘love of God is shed abroad’ in the hearts of Christians, ‘by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them.’ They have ‘received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God.’ ‘Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ Alas! Christian brethren, how *should* we know it?—how should we understand this holy mystery—the indwelling of the blessed Spirit, in a man—a worm of the earth! if our party feelings—our worldly interests—our uncharitableness—our bigoted attachment to what is no essential part of religion—are allowed to quench the spiritual life of the soul!

These idolatries make the heart rather a ‘seat of images of jealousy,’ than a holy temple to the Lord. For what evidence is there, that God has taken up his abode, where there is nothing but coldness and indifference, lasting, through a life-

time, towards those whom we ought to love,—since they love Him, and resemble Christ?—or where coldness only gives place to contention — not to the vital warmth of brotherly affection? Can our religion, then, be real, if we have not learned to ‘love the brethren?’—if we cherish aversion and hostile feeling, instead of sympathy, towards the *seen* image of the Saviour? Surely, this is to be whited sepulchres—not living temples!

‘I KNOW THY WORKS’—‘I have somewhat against thee, because THOU HAST LEFT THY FIRST LOVE. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent.’—‘I KNOW THY WORKS—that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.’*—Where is now the once-flourishing church of Ephesus?—the church of Sardis?—of Laodicea? Ephesus, the renowned city, the pride of Asia, is a wretched hamlet of a few huts! Sardis is a ruin! Laodicea, the rich, and the self-sufficient, is a habitation for the beasts of the field; and no prayers are heard near the scene of utter desolation, but those of the mosque!—‘True and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord!’

* Rev. ii. iii.

But there is a remnant, made up of every christian name and denomination, who feel that they are *one*; and who are anxious to manifest this unity. Love, though limited, and rare, is not extinct in the church; and this is an *earnest*, we may trust, of greater things.—‘I KNOW THY WORKS, AND CHARITY’—‘HOLD FAST TILL I COME:’—‘I KNOW THY WORKS: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.’—The Saviour does not despise the ‘day of small things.’ He will surely, yet, revisit his fallen church, in answer to prayer!

Let not the friends of union despond, therefore, amidst unfavourable circumstances—but *cherish hope*; and encourage each other. The time is approaching, if the church shall wrestle with God for the blessing—when all that hinders the visible unity of true believers, shall be taken out of the way. The ‘Lord knoweth them that are his:’ but the *world* must also know. This is essential to the world’s conversion—to the fulfilment of prophecy—to the finished evidence of the truth of Christianity—to the triumph of the cross, as the instrument of peace! Agents will not be wanting, if the church be not wanting in prayer. God will lay his hand on all the framework of society, to promote this union of his

people: for till it be farther advanced, the gospel-chariot is retarded in its career: the church, herself, strangely arrests its progress through the earth! If our present church-systems be deficient, they will give way; and other modifications will arise, more fitted to unite all who love the Redeemer, in love to each other—more suited to calm and heavenly devotion, and to consolidated effort in winning the world to Christ. If men of ardent zeal and benevolence are wanting—men of enlarged charity—men to be, as it were, ‘flames of fire’; God can send forth other Whitefields, and Wesleys, and Hills, again to rouse the slumbering church. Or he can create a new order of agents, when RELIGION, LEARNING, and FREEDOM—now asunder, and presenting a discordant mass of moral elements, shall be blended into one. Eloquence, the master to handle the organ of human emotion, still owes an arrear of tribute to Christianity: antiquity has not yet lent all its stores of power, to form the *Christian* orator; and the church mourns for some of her sons, (because they *are not*,) who made a holy use of ‘excellency of speech.’ Or God can raise up other martyrs to charity; such as Calixtus, and the ever-memorable Dureus—men willing to sacrifice their lives, and their all, in the work of going about, endeavouring to dissuade Christians from strife, and imploring them to cultivate mutual love. By whatever means

—the law of love must be found elsewhere than merely in the divine statute-book. It must be written on '*fleshly tables of the heart*.' The reign of charity is not to be deferred, till earth is exchanged for heaven, and mortals are transformed to angels. Rather are men, as Christians, to learn *how* to be angels, by loving one another with a pure heart:—charity is yet to 'triumph in the flesh.'

Christians! your own comfort—the evidence of your personal religion—the honor of the Master whom you profess to serve—the prosperity of his church—the salvation of the world—the millennial glory—depend on your cultivating the spirit of brotherly love! As you value your own souls—as you value the souls of *millions*—as you hold dear your loyalty to Christ—as you would desire to recoil at the thought of betraying him to his enemies—'crucifying him afresh,'—and putting him to 'an open shame'—cultivate charity!—cultivate it, though it should cost you the plucking out of the right eye of bigotry—the cutting off of the right hand of pride and prejudice! Let no worldly, selfish motive, be allowed to quench love. It is worth all sacrifices! It is the soul of your religion—it is your spiritual life—your strength—your usefulness! By it, alone, can you hope to rescue a lost world from that abyss of misery, into which sin has plunged it! The nations groan under the

yoke of Satan, and all the earth sighs to be redeemed! The fields are white already to harvest: but the labourers are few; and they refuse to work *together*. They are too much occupied in contention, to do the work of Christ! The pagan—the mahometan—the jew—all are waiting for what does not yet appear; though it is the peculiar mark by which they are to know the true church—the manifest *oneness* of the Saviour's disciples—the grand evidence of the truth of Christianity to mankind!

The effect which, we *know*, the jars and discords of Christians have, in paralyzing their instrumentality as agents in the salvation of the world—cannot, surely, be reflected on, without grief and dismay! The unbeliever taunts those who profess religion, by asking—what *certainly* there is, in *that* which seems little else than a theme of endless disputation and strife? In this way, he is able to steel his conscience against all that can be *said*, on the duty of obeying the gospel: for professed Christians, themselves, do but appear to half-believe it, when they speak of the unity of the church, while *he* beholds them, alienated, or at variance. Would not a recurrence to grand first principles—a proper view of the Cross of Christ, wholly alter this strange and lamentable state of things? The Cross would, then, be the centre of attraction to all parties; where they would all meet

to forget their dissensions. How would a sight of the Cross melt and subdue the mind ! Realised by faith, it would inspire deep commiseration for a ruined world—for perishing and undying souls—the myriads that are hurrying down the stream of time, to eternity—unwarned—uninstructed—unprepared !—victims of the ‘ second death ’ !

Whatever we may know of the *theory* of Christianity—how much remains to be *felt*, before there is a just estimate of the great object of the Divine Redeemer’s errand to the earth ! When shall those who call themselves Christians, learn to sacrifice their prejudices, pride, worldly-mindedness, and party spirit—all of which are so awfully condemned by God—to the honor of their Master, and the eternal interests of mankind ! It was those *eternal* interests that moved the Saviour, when he wept over Jerusalem—when he spent a life of privation and humiliation, and suffered a death of ignominy and torture ! O could those impressions be lastingly felt, which it is so inconsistent with believing the gospel *not to feel*—how affecting—how tremendous—would that responsibility appear, which rests on Christians, as the representatives of their Lord !—how terrible and appalling—the thought of virtually denying him, and being accessory to the perdition of souls—by setting mankind the example of disregard to his great law of love ; and leading them to conclude, that even the professed friends of Christ, value

their own private feelings, and their own will, and their own self-interest—more than his dying commands—and the salvation of a world !

Let it be remembered that *Heaven is a place of love*. Do Christians expect to be separated, *there*, into sects and denominations? It might almost be supposed so—seeing that division is so cherished a feature of the church on earth ! Or, rather, would it not seem to be imagined that there will be *as many* heavens, hereafter, as there are, now, religious parties ! For could there have been less mutual sympathy, and more estrangement, than have frequently appeared between professing Christians—had they known that they were destined eternally to dwell in separate and distinct regions of the redeemed universe—each party in its own heaven?—like inhabitants of different planets, inaccessible to each other across the immense voids of space !—that the heaven of churchmen, and the heaven of dissenters, were not to be the same world—that each sect was to have its own little province ; where it might cherish, for ever, its distinguishing peculiarities, and find its supreme bliss in that feeling of caste and party, to which it has been so industriously training and educating itself on earth !

No—Christians ! heaven is not divided—the church triumphant is *one* : and did the church militant answer to its name, as warring only

against evil, it would be the image of that unity ! There is but one city of God, the New and Holy Jerusalem—‘ that great city ’ ; ‘ and the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it ’. There is one Beatific Vision—the manifestation of God in Christ, whom all shall adore ; for ‘ *they shall see his face* : ’—one song of Moses and the Lamb, in which all shall unite—one new song,

‘ Loud as from numbers without number ; sweet
As from blest voices, uttering joy ! ’

This song is the chorus of all the chosen race, associated as brethren, who express their *mutual* interest in the salvation wrought out by the Lamb. The burden of praise is : ‘ Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed *us* to God by thy blood—and hast made *us* unto our God, kings and priests ; and we shall reign on the earth.’ The multitude is one ‘ which no man can number, of *all* nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.’ Here are no jealousies—no divisions:—all say, with one voice : ‘ Amen : blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever.’ What will those, who shall be accounted worthy, through Christ, to dwell in that holy world, *then* think of their present dissensions ? If it were possible, heaven itself would be embittered by the remembrance of them, and their bearing on the misery of souls ! Alas ! these strifes

are found outlasting human life—continuing from generation to generation : nor has the church yet grown wise by years !

Let Christians cultivate the friendship of those, here below, with whom it will be their happiness to dwell, for ever, in the life to come. Let them remember that whatever sensible glories may belong to the locality of heaven—however splendid its materialism—it is not this visible glory, that will constitute the joy. It is not pearly gates—nor mansions of light—nor golden harps—nor crowns—nor thrones of principalities and powers—though all these should literally exist:—these could not make a heaven. No external glory would compensate for some *inward* and indwelling spring of bliss—some well of living water, within the breast. No sounds, though rapturous as the song of the angelic host on the plains of Bethlehem, or as the strains that were heard when the morning stars sang together over the new-born creation, could inspire delight, unless there were the principle of harmony within. Apart from this, all were but the ‘voice of the charmer to the deaf adder’—or as music to the ‘heavy heart.’

Nor could heaven consist in the mere contemplation of the wonders of Omnipotence, displayed in new and ever-varying forms, inconceivable to man as mortal:—or in a gigantic reach of mind,

surpassing that of the most gifted of the sons of men, a thousand-fold more than *his* powers exceed the first dawn of an infant's reason. Not even the most ineffable revelation of the moral perfections of God in Christ—the manifestation of all that is glorious which a creature can comprehend, could produce delight—were it possible for these displays to be made to a mind, destitute of the reigning principle of a spiritual and holy world. The element of Heaven, is LOVE—love emanating from God, the ever-flowing fountain; and circulating through all the glorious ranks of angels, and redeemed spirits—uniting all—and for ever! Heaven centres within—the mind is its own heaven! As a professed Christian, on earth, is ‘*nothing*’ without love; so an angel in heaven, without love, would be a fiend!

Ye who hope to dwell together, for ever, in the Heaven of holy love—hold that dear, which is the earnest of your inheritance! The church on earth, and the church above, make but one communion. The brotherhood of saints, is the image of that world, where love is universal and eternal. ‘Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.’ For your ‘brethren and companions’ sakes,’ say: ‘Peace be within thee.’ Strive, O strive for peace! Forget not the divided church, in your private intercessions—at your family altars—in public worship: and whatever plans may be adopted, in order to benefit the

world—remember that the *soul* of the moral power of the church must be sought in her unity.

When the blessed hour shall have arrived which shall witness that the church is visibly one—then may we hope for that glorious consummation, to be announced by the ‘seventh angel,’ and by ‘great voices in heaven, saying: the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign, for ever and ever!’

May He, whose name is ‘Love,’ speedily heal the wounds, under which the church is languishing, through her manifold divisions!—May the ancient unity, which once made her glorious, return!—May the presence of her Lord and Master return!—‘The Spirit and the Bride say, come.’—‘Even so, come, Lord Jesus’!

THE END.

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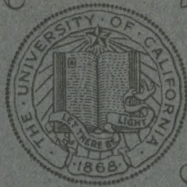
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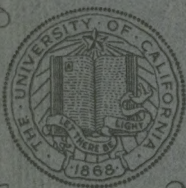


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